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Joint Inspection Unit

Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2011/5).

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ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Prepared by

M. Mounir Zahran

Joint Inspection Unit

Geneva 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system
JIU/REP/2011/5

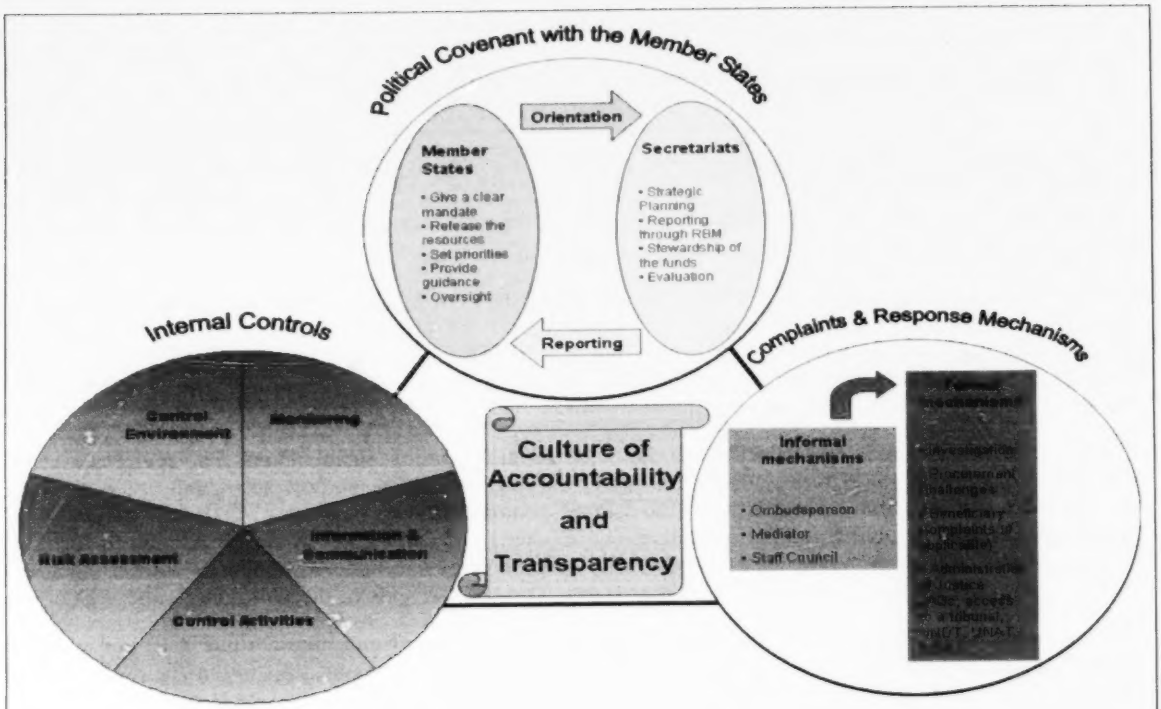
The United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 64/259, requested in its paragraph 4 the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) to submit to it for its consideration at the main part of its sixty-seventh session, "a comparative analysis report on various accountability frameworks in the United Nations system".[1] Accordingly, the JIU included this topic in its Programme of Work for 2011.

The objective of the present report is to map out and assess the existing (various) accountability frameworks in the United Nations system and to identify gaps where they exist. The report also analysed the components which exist in the organizations that do not possess a stand-alone formal accountability framework document. In addition, the report identified good/best practices in developing and implementing accountability frameworks/components of accountability.

The scope of the review is system-wide, covering all JIU participating organizations. The review covered United Nations Secretariat entities, offices and field locations in order to see how accountability was being operationalized away from headquarters. Two United Nations offices, namely UNOG and UNOV, one peacekeeping mission UNIFIL and two regional commissions ECE and ESCWA were interviewed for this purpose. It also sought the experiences of several other prominent international public institutions such as CTBTO, EC, IFRC, Inter-American Development Bank, IOM, OECD, OSCE, the World Bank and WTO.

The Inspector notes that accountability is complex, multi-dimensional and expectations vary and change depending on the lens through which it is viewed. The Inspector provides an illustration (below) of what makes for a robust accountability framework based on desk reviews, research, interviews and questionnaire responses and drawing on public sector frameworks such as the Global Accountability Project Framework. Through collected data, interviews and questionnaires, the Inspector identified 17 benchmarks to measure a robust accountability framework based on transparency and a culture of accountability. Measurement of implementation of the framework would need to test whether the benchmarks are being implemented effectively and efficiently and assess their impacts. The present review does not delve into the implementation of the framework. The Inspector recommends follow-up studies to test the implementation of the benchmarks proposed in this report.

[1] Resolution 64/259, para. 4.



Main findings and conclusions

The Inspector found that seven United Nations organizations possess a stand-alone formal accountability framework (ILO, United Nations, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, WHO). Three Secretariat entities ECE, UNEP and UNHCR) possess a programme level accountability framework. Other United Nations system organizations have various key components of accountability to varying degrees, several of them with strong internal control systems or components in place. The Inspector concludes that accountability goes beyond a robust internal control system. Accountability should encompass issues such as identifying the political covenant with member States, recourse for key stakeholders to complaints and response mechanisms, transparency within organizations to member States, beneficiaries and the general public and a strong culture of accountability.

The stand-alone accountability frameworks are comprehensive although more work could be done in the area of information and communication, especially in the internal and external communication and complaints and response mechanisms to member States, donors, beneficiaries and the public. The stand-alone accountability frameworks of the United Nations, UNDP and UNICEF include a political covenant with member States. All of these frameworks include some elements of internal control mechanisms with the most comprehensive internal control elements found in the ILO and UNOPS frameworks. Missing from the frameworks of the United Nations, UNFPA and WHO was identification of a culture of accountability as a fundamental pillar of accountability. The ILO framework included reference to a culture of accountability without a clear description of what this entailed. With the exception of the United Nations, these organizations had no reference to transparency nor identification of management leadership in accountability. United Nations, UNDP and UNICEF were good examples in the area of transparency and management responsibility for organizational accountability. The Inspector recognizes that the accountability framework of the United Nations Secretariat includes most of the key components that must be part of an accountability framework.

In organizations that did not possess a stand-alone accountability framework the Inspector found that most had elements of an internal control system in place and that this was not the weakest area in accountability. For these organizations further work is needed to define and develop a formal accountability framework, inspired by the benchmarks identified in this report, and to further develop in the area of clarity of responsibility/delegation of authority and complaints and response mechanisms.

In all of the organizations interviewed the study identified a gap in perception between the staff perception of the strength of their culture of accountability and management leadership and management's view on the culture of accountability. The review concluded that transparency and a culture of accountability were a necessity for the framework to move from paper to implementation.

A culture of accountability is nascent in most United Nations system organizations and needs further efforts to reach maturity. Consistent application of discipline and awards are needed in addition to training and ownership; the United Nations system lacks a comprehensive system of motivation and sanctions. The system of sanctions is stronger than the system of motivation, awards and rewards. There is a need to develop a stronger system to ensure personal accountability. However the Inspector concluded that the culture will only reach full maturity when the senior managers set the tone at the top, bolstered with examples for all to see of holding themselves accountable.

Staff must first be granted responsibility and authority to carry out their assigned duties in order to be held accountable. In some organizations these are not aligned, leading to incoherence and confusion resulting in a blurring of the accountability line. This is a challenge, especially for organizations with a decentralized/field structure where delegation of authority may differ per subject area.

Overall the United Nations system organizations need to put more efforts into the complaints and response mechanisms, especially in opening up their channels of communication to receive complaints/concerns from the general public, and stakeholders such as beneficiaries. The establishment of credible channels such as ombudsperson and mediator would further cement internal controls.

Against this background the report contains seven recommendations: two addressed to legislative bodies and five to the executive heads as follows:

Recommendations for consideration by legislative organs

- **Recommendation 2: The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations, which have not yet done so, should take decisions based on a results-based management approach, and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to implement the organizations' strategic plans and results-based management.**
- **Recommendation 7: The General Assembly and other legislative bodies should request their executive heads to undertake a follow-up evaluation on the implementation of the relevant accountability frameworks/systems for their consideration in 2015.**

Recommendations addressed to the executive heads

- **Recommendation 1: Executive heads of United Nations system organizations that have not yet developed stand-alone accountability frameworks should do so as a matter of priority inspired by the benchmarks contained in this report.**
- **Recommendation 3: Executive heads should incorporate evaluation, including self-evaluation results, in their annual reporting to legislative bodies.**
- **Recommendation 4: Executive heads of organizations which have not yet done so should inform their staff members of their decisions on disciplinary measures imposed on staff by publishing lists (in annexes to the annual reports and on a website) describing the offence and measures taken while ensuring anonymity of the staff member concerned.**

- **Recommendation 5: Executive heads should instruct their human resources divisions to put mechanisms in place for recognizing outstanding performance by developing creative ways and means to motivate staff through awards, rewards and other incentives.**

- **Recommendation 6: Executive heads should develop and implement an information disclosure policy to heighten transparency and accountability in their respective organizations as a matter of urgency in the event that they not have already done so and report to the legislative bodies accordingly.**

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ASG	Assistant Secretary-General
BOA	Board of Auditors
CAO	Compliance Advisor Ombudsman
CEB	Chief Executive Board
COSO	Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission
CTBTO	Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
EC	European Commission
ERM	Enterprise Risk Management
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
ESCWA	United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia
FDS	Financial Disclosure Statement
FRR	Financial Regulations and Rules
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAP	Global Accountability Project
HLCM	High Level Committee on Management
HR	Human Resources
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICIM	Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILOAT	International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INTOSAI	International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standards
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
RBM	Results-based management
SRR	Staff Regulations and Rules
UBRAF	Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDT	United Nations Dispute Tribunal
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
UPU	Universal Postal Union
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
USG	Under-Secretary-General
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. The evolution of the definition and framework on accountability finds its origins in General Assembly resolution 48/218 B when the Joint Inspection Unit presented its report on "Accountability and Oversight in the United Nations system",[2] which concerned mainly the oversight functions in the system at that time. The said resolution[3] called for a consolidation of oversight functions in audit, evaluation, inspections and investigations. Since then the system has slowly built up various components relating to accountability over the years, notably in the following reports and resolutions: A/60/312, A/60/883 and Add.1 and 2, A/60/846/Add.6, A/62/701 and Corr.1 and Add.1; resolutions 60/1 and 61/245.

2. Following a 2005 report by the Secretary-General reviewing existing mechanisms of accountability and oversight and suggesting reform measures to strengthen accountability,[4] the General Assembly has been requesting further reports on the progress of implementing those measures as well as on the Secretariat's accountability framework, enterprise risk management and internal control framework, and results-based management (RBM) framework.[5] The reports were submitted by the Secretary-General in 2006 and 2008 respectively,[6] and a definition of accountability was proposed in 2006.[7]

3. The General Assembly further requested the Secretary-General in resolution 63/276 to submit a comprehensive report on accountability.[8] In response to the resolution a report was submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session entitled "Towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat".[9]

4. The report of the Secretary-General includes eight recommendations for strengthening accountability in the United Nations Secretariat in addition to a definition of the term "accountability".

5. In considering the said report, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/259, which stated in its paragraph 4 "*Requests* the Joint Inspection Unit to submit to the General Assembly, for consideration at the main part of its sixty-seventh session, a comparative analysis report on various accountability frameworks in the United Nations system."[10] Accordingly, JIU included this topic in its Programme of Work for 2011.

6. In his report A/64/640, after having considered definitions provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Secretary-General came forward with a definition. However that definition was deemed to be insufficient by the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) noted in its report A/64/683 that the definition provided by the Secretary-General lacked clarity and the Board of Auditors (BOA) remarked that it lacked reference to efficiency, effectiveness and timeliness as well as the role of the oversight bodies. ACABQ members were concerned by the following phrase in the definition, "... subject to the availability of resources and the constraints posed by external factors".[11] The Advisory Committee articulated that it would be further desirable if there was to be a common definition of accountability for all entities under the authority of the Secretary-General. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) pointed out the lack of reference to personal responsibility for results. In addition JIU drew attention to the

[2] JIU/REP/93/5.
[3] Resolution 48/218 B.
[4] A/60/312.
[5] Resolutions 60/1 and 61/245.
[6] A/60/883 and Add.1 and 2 and A/62/701 and Corr.1 and Add.1.
[7] A/60/846/Add.6.
[8] In the French version of the text 'accountability' was translated as *le principe de responsabilité*. The Inspector believes '*la redevabilité*' to be the more accurate terminology in French.
[9] A/64/640 of 29 January 2010.
[10] Resolution 64/259 para. 4.
[11] A/64/683, para. 10.

International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) definition. Having considered the ACABQ report and the report of the Secretary-General,[12] the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/259 which defined accountability in its operative paragraph 8 as follows:

> Accountability is the obligation of the Secretariat and its staff members to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken by them, and to be responsible for honouring their commitments, without qualification or exception.
>
> Accountability includes achieving objectives and high-quality results in a timely and cost-effective manner, in fully implementing and delivering on all mandates to the Secretariat approved by the United Nations intergovernmental bodies and other subsidiary organs established by them in compliance with all resolutions, regulations, rules and ethical standards; truthful, objective, accurate and timely reporting on performance results; responsible stewardship of funds and resources; all aspects of performance, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions; and with due recognition to the important role of the oversight bodies and in full compliance with accepted recommendations.

7. The Inspector notes that the definition of accountability approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/259 includes the core elements proposed by the Secretary-General in A/64/640; the most notable difference between the definition of accountability proposed by the Secretary-General in A/64/640 and that adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/259 is the condition in A/64/640 that "[a]ccountability is the obligation of the Organization ... subject to the availability of resources and the constraints posed by external factors"[13] versus the language in resolution 64/259 that, "[a]ccountability is the obligation of the Secretariat ... without qualification or exception".[14]

8. Accountability frameworks bring together many components of an organizational framework which has been addressed by JIU reports in the past. In 1995, JIU issued a report entitled "Accountability, Management Improvement, and Oversight in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/95/2). More recently, the Unit has reviewed and issued the following reports: "Oversight Lacunae in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2006/2), the series on results-based management (JIU/REP/2004/5-8 and JIU/REP/2006/6), "Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations system organizations" (JIU/REP/2009/8), "Ethics in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2010/3), "The audit function in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2010/5), "Review of Enterprise Risk Management in the United Nations system: benchmarking framework" (JIU/REP/2010/4), "Transparency in the selection and appointment of senior managers in the United Nations Secretariat" (JIU/REP/2011/2) and "The investigation function in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2011/7) which provides input to the present mandated report.

B. Objectives and scope

9. The objectives of the mandated comparative analysis of the accountability frameworks were to map out and assess the various existing accountability frameworks in the United Nations system and to identify gaps where they exist. This evaluation also analyses the enabling environments in different organizations, funds and programmes that may contribute to fostering a strong accountability culture, or alternatively discourage this. In addition, the report identifies good/best practices in developing and implementing accountability frameworks.

10. The report provides recommendations to United Nations system organizations on accountability frameworks. The findings of this report should assist the key stakeholders and managers in making further decisions for developing, strengthening or implementing accountability frameworks/policies.

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[12] "Towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat", A/64/640.

[13] A/64/640, para. 10, definition of accountability.

[14] Resolution 64/259, sect. A, para. 8, definition adopted by the General Assembly.

11. The scope is system-wide, covering all JIU participating organizations.[15] The review covered United Nations Secretariat entities, offices and field locations in order to see how accountability was being operationalized away from headquarters. Two United Nations offices, namely the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), one peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and two regional commissions, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), were interviewed for this purpose. The present analysis also sought the experiences of several other prominent international public institutions such as the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), the European Commission of the European Union (EC), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

C. Methodology

12. The methodology for this review consisted of a preliminary desk review which included a review of publicly available documentation on accountability frameworks as well as research materials from past related JIU reports, General Assembly documents related to accountability, organizations' internal document and policies, and relevant oversight reports (BOA, OIOS). Questionnaires were sent to all JIU participating organizations. On the basis of the responses received the Inspector conducted interviews with officials of selected participating organizations in person, or via video and telephone conferences.

13. The Inspector also conducted interviews with key officials of several other international organizations, including EC, IDB, IFRC, IOM, OECD, OSCE, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the World Bank and WTO. The Inspector does not cite information sources, where appropriate, to protect the confidence interviewees entrusted to him during the interviews.

14. The present report identifies benchmarks for a robust accountability framework. These were developed from the JIU report, "Results-based management in the United Nations in the context of the reform process"[16] which identified nine benchmarks on RBM, eight benchmarks on delegation of authority, eight on accountability and eight on performance management. The study was inspired by and in some cases benefited from these benchmarks. Others were identified through an impact analysis starting with the question, *"if an organization was accountable at all levels which practices/institutions would be in place?"* Necessary components were added to complement the RBM benchmarks. After each benchmark the Inspector identifies the tools that support its implementation.

15. Comments from participating organizations on the draft report were taken into account in finalizing the report. In accordance with article 11.2 of the JIU Statute, this report has been finalized after consultation among the Inspectors so as to test its conclusions and recommendations against the collective wisdom of the Unit. The Inspector wises to express appreciation to all those who assisted him in the preparation of this report and to those who participated in the interviews and so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise.

16. The present analysis focuses on minimum pillars and benchmarks needed for a robust accountability framework. The measurement of implementation of the framework would need to test whether the benchmarks are being implemented effectively and efficiently and assess their impacts. The present review does not delve into the implementation of the framework. Thus the Inspector recommends follow-up studies to test the implementation of the benchmarks proposed in this report.

17. The Inspector was informed of many recent developments and practices in the field of accountability. It is not possible to include all of the good practices that the Inspector came across through his interviews; only the most visible among many good practices are included in the present review.

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[15] The United Nations, its subsidiary bodies, entities, funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
[16] JIU/REP/2006/6.

18. To facilitate the handling of the report, the implementation of its recommendations and the monitoring thereof, annex II contains a table indicating whether the report is submitted to the organizations concerned for action or for information. The table identifies recommendations relevant for each organization, specifying the relevant addressee for considerations.

II. COMPONENTS OF A ROBUST ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

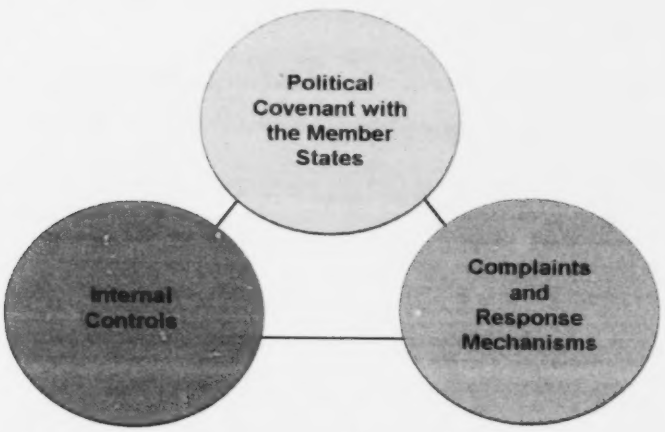
A. Key elements of an accountability framework

19. Figure 1 below illustrates how the Inspector views the minimum requirements for an accountability framework. It is acknowledged that organizations have organized their frameworks in a myriad of ways. The report is not endorsing a particular model but merely using the illustration to articulate his vision of a robust accountability framework.

20. The following presentation of an accountability framework is based on good/best practice identified through questionnaire reviews, interviews, open source material available and documents sent by interested organizations. Relevant principles and benchmarks from the Global Accountability Project (GAP) framework have also been considered as far as they were coherent with United Nations system particularities.[17]

21. This presentation of a framework is based on the assumption that a strong accountability framework can only be implemented if it has integrated proactive and reactive systems, transparency and a strong culture of accountability as the common basis for these. Proactive elements include internal controls and the RBM system providing more accountability of the organization to the member States. The reactive element comprising formal and informal[18] response mechanisms would act as a failsafe, a last resort mechanism to apply accountability when everything else has failed.

Figure 1



The pyramid structure delineates the hierarchical relationship between member States, organizations and the staff.

[17] The Global Accountability Framework was developed by the One World Trust under the Global Accountability Project (www.oneworldtrust.org). The Global Accountability Framework was developed on the basis of five years of empirical research and consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders.

[18] Here informal and formal are defined from a legal perspective rather than whether the structures in place are formal or informal.

22. First and foremost the accountability relationship must be a mutual one with accountability *to and of* member States which provide to the organization the institutional mandates, priorities/guidance and the resources to implement those priorities. Member States provide oversight over the organizations through oversight mechanisms such as external audit, the Board of Auditors and JIU. The organization which shares the place at the top of the pyramid is responsible for strategic planning and programming based on member States' guidance and priorities and for the delivery of those results through the principle of stewardship of the resources, evaluations to ensure their activities are feeding into better delivery and achievements and reporting through evaluations on operational, administrative and financial matters. Although the Inspector understands member States' dissatisfaction with the caveat given in the Secretary-General's definition of accountability (referenced above) he notes that the organization can only be held responsible for delivering results by mutual agreement with the member States which entrust the resources to the organizations to implement the mandates. Without this mutual and political agreement the accountability will be dysfunctional from the outset. This relationship must be based on mutual agreement and political will. Internal controls, illustrated by the second circle, are then needed to ensure that organizations have policies, rules, procedures and the environment in place so that the organization is delivering its strategic plans and mandate in line with the principles of stewardship, ethical standards, regulations and rules. Internal control[19] should consist of:

Internal Control Components	Tools to support implementation
Control environment: sets the tone of the organization, influencing the control consciousness of its staff. It is the foundation for all other components of internal control, providing discipline and structure.[20]	Staff regulations and rules, human resources (HR) policies, sanctions and discipline, ethics and standards of conduct, whistle-blower and anti-fraud policies, integrity, management philosophy and operating style, the way management assigns responsibility and authority and development of its staff (culture of accountability).
Risk assessment: process of identifying and analysing relevant risks to the achievement of the entity's objectives and determining the appropriate response.[21]	Risk register, risk assessment, action plan to mitigate risks, enterprise risk management (ERM).
Control activities: policies and procedures established to address risks and to achieve the entity's objectives. Control activities must be appropriate, function consistently according to plan throughout the period, and be cost effective, comprehensive, reasonable and directly relate to the control objectives.[22]	Delegation of authority and management responsibilities, letter of representation/assurances, financial disclosure, conflict of interest.

[19] Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) internal control framework from "Guidelines for Internal Control Standards for the Public Sector," International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). INTOSAI define internal control as, "*... an integral process that is effected by an entity's management and personnel and is designed to address risks and to provide reasonable assurance that in pursuit of the entity's mission, the following general objectives are being achieved: executive orderly, ethical, economical and efficient and effective operations, fulfilling accountability obligations, complying with applicable laws and regulations, safeguarding resources against loss, misuse and damage.*" p. 6 of above mentioned guidelines.

[20] INTOSAI guidelines p. 17.

[21] Ibid., p. 22.

[22] Ibid., p. 28.

Internal Control Components	Tools to support implementation
Information and communication: full recording, classification and documentation of transactions and events. The information should be identified, captured and communicated to staff within a fixed time frame that enables staff to carry out their internal control responsibilities. It should not only include internal data but also external events and activities that affect decision-making.[23]	Enterprise resource planning, annual reports on finance, oversight, operations/implementation etc. Information disclosure policy.
Monitoring: assesses the quality of the organization's performance over time. Monitoring should ensure that audit findings and recommendations are adequately and promptly resolved.[24]	Internal audit, inspections, feedback and implementation of audit/inspection recommendations, performance assessments, 360-degree feedback on performances, senior compacts (if applicable), scorecards.

23. The third circle in the illustration above (figure 1) entitled, "Complaints and Response Mechanisms"[25] represents the last resort when the established internal controls have failed. They are the channels developed by the organization that enable member States, stakeholders, staff members and beneficiaries to file complaints on issues of non-compliance or against management decisions and actions. Response mechanisms are equally important in ensuring that not only do member States, staff, stakeholders, beneficiaries, and staff have the possibility to file complaints and raise concerns, but that these are also properly reviewed and acted upon within established timelines and mechanisms.

24. These components must be embedded in the pillars of an accountability culture: transparency and a strong culture of accountability. An accountability framework can only be as effective as the organization's culture of accountability and commitment to transparency. The organization management must be committed to support and develop the culture. The following basic assumptions should guide the enforcement of any accountability framework inside the United Nations system. Hence, the **Inspector concludes that an accountability framework should be based on transparency and has to be supported by a strong culture of accountability.**

B. Pillars of accountability

a. Transparency

25. Transparency is a fundamental pillar, together with the culture of accountability. It refers to an organization's openness about its activities, providing information on what it is doing, where and how this takes place, and how it is performing. Implementation of RBM is clearly a step towards greater transparency throughout the United Nations system. Transparency also enables stakeholders (member States, staff, beneficiaries from aid agencies, and the general public) to identify whether an organization is operating according to the law, whether it is conforming to relevant standards and how its performance relates to targets. In turn, this enables stakeholders to make informed decisions and assess choices made by the organization.[26]

26. Transparency not only relates to information being available inside (e.g. via knowledge management systems, intranet) but to outside the organization (via website and social networks, and external and public relations). The organization must actively disseminate information to relevant stakeholders. In other words, it should take a proactive approach to information and not release it only if requested by a stakeholder.

27. As a general principle information should be freely available to everyone, except in very specific cases where the nature of the information prohibits its widespread circulation inside and/or outside the organization

[23] INTOSAI guidelines p. 36.
[24] Ibid., p. 40.
[25] Global Accountability Report 2007 Global Accountability Framework, One World Trust p. 11.
[26] Global Accountability Report 2007 Global Accountability Framework, One World Trust.

(e.g. personnel files, internal memorandums, investigation files,).[27] This highlights the need for a comprehensive policy on information disclosure, including justification of any exceptions to full disclosure and – as already mentioned in recommendation 2 of the JIU report on knowledge management in the United Nations system[28] a clear and unified system for classifying the organization's internal documents in an organized way (Knowledge Management System). The following transparency pillar is discussed in further detail under 'Internal controls: information and communication' section.

b. Culture of accountability

28. The JIU RBM report identified this very important cultural issue in its benchmark 3, "[a]ccountability is applicable at all levels, from top down. The executive heads and the heads of major organizational units are therefore the first to be held accountable for the results that they are expected to deliver."[29]

29. This culture is only partially related to tools or systems (control mechanisms); it is mainly modelled by humans and their behaviours and interactions. The tools and systems are only a means to ensure compliance and to provide a strong control environment for accountability. Accountability frameworks and underlying systems are necessary but not sufficient for accountability to be a value lived and implemented by 100 per cent of the staff. It should therefore not be taken for granted that organizations which have a perfect accountability framework are able to implement it effectively. An organization with a framework or many of the accountability components may be an organization with no effective accountability if it lacks a culture of accountability.

30. A system-wide and in-depth analysis of the culture of accountability would go beyond the scope of this report. Since accountability is primarily a cultural issue, it strongly relies on perception by the staff at all levels of the hierarchical pyramid. Therefore, a comprehensive staff survey would be needed to assess its strong and weak points.

31. However, some general guidelines are needed on managerial and staff behaviour regarding accountability. They should be regarded as common principles guiding general decision-making and specifically targeting employment policies, performance assessments, ethics policies, rewards and sanctions mechanisms inside organizations.

32. The Inspector has identified five key principles (factors/behaviours) that help describe and guide a culture of accountability in any organization. These are based on the JIU report, "Results-based management in the United Nations in the context of the reform process."[30] These principles are:

Five key principles for accountability:

1. **Leading by values and examples - accountability as a top priority in day-to-day operation and evidenced by high standards of integrity of senior management.**
2. **Leading by information and communication - accountability through transparent decision-making.**
3. **Leading by motivation - accountability through recognition of staff achievements.**
4. **Leading by guidance and discipline - a zero-tolerance policy for unacceptable behaviour at all levels.**
5. **Leading by participation - an open dialogue should encourage mutual accountability.**

[27] UNICEF suggested to the Inspector that Internal Audit Reports should be subject to full disclosure.
[28] JIU/REP/2007/6.
[29] JIU/REP/2006/6 para. 96.
[30] JIU/REP/2006/6 as outlined in Section III Accountability.

1. Leading by values and example - accountability as a top priority in day-to-day operation and evidenced by high standards of integrity of senior management

33. Leading by values is the basis for all other key competencies of a manager. The value of accountability should be the number one priority in every aspect of the organization's/division's/work unit's day-to-day operation. Through their decisions, the managers have to put the emphasis on accountability. In the event of a conflicting decision, accountability should always come first. This also underlines the need for a strong accountability framework, but also for a strong culture of compliance, personal integrity and accountability.

34. In any organization, behaviour of leaders automatically trickles down the hierarchical levels. Effectively the tone from the top has to be unambiguous and every manager should abide 100 per cent by the regulations, rules and policies. **The Inspector suggests that the United Nations system organizations clearly identify accountability as a core value and not just a core competency**.

2. Leading by information and communication - accountability through transparent decision-making

35. Information and communication are a crucial component of a positive culture of accountability. Management should exert every effort to close the existing information gaps between hierarchical levels, divisions and work units of their organization. In terms of management skills and organizational culture, accountability is fostered by transparent decision-making processes. Staff and other stakeholders have to be informed about the process leading to decisions and its outcomes and perceive the process to be transparent. Lack of information and communication can seriously handicap an organization's effectiveness.

3. Leading by motivation - accountability through recognition of staff achievements

36. Accountability and integrity have to be permanently mutually supported and encouraged by real or psychological incentives. Short-term advantage and opportunity often prevail over the long-term perspective. Thus, continuous and strong positive reinforcements are needed to overcome this bias. There is always a need to encourage accountability and to motivate staff to act in an accountable way. Simple recognition can lead to increased staff accountability. Awards and rewards can supplement this, but their impact is limited in time and duration. Continuous recognition by supervisors and colleagues is the key to increased awareness of accountability issues.

4. Leading by guidance and discipline - a zero-tolerance policy for unacceptable behaviour at all levels

37. In order for the staff to perceive accountability as being one of the United Nations core values, management has to provide strong guidance first. Acceptable behaviour should be highlighted and the reasons for classifying some behaviours as not acceptable should be explained. The Staff Regulations and Rules (SRR) must be complemented by an explanatory section/separate document highlighting the types of sanctions practised for certain kinds of misbehaviour. Sanctions should be carried out in an equal, systematic and transparent way from the top. All sanctions should be properly justified and executed with a thorough follow-up. **This should be corroborated by the Secretary-General's annual reports on disciplinary matters and alleged unlawful behaviour and interviews conducted with management and staff representatives of United Nations organizations. Effective sanction mechanisms would deter every hierarchical level in the organization from engaging in non-accountable activities.**

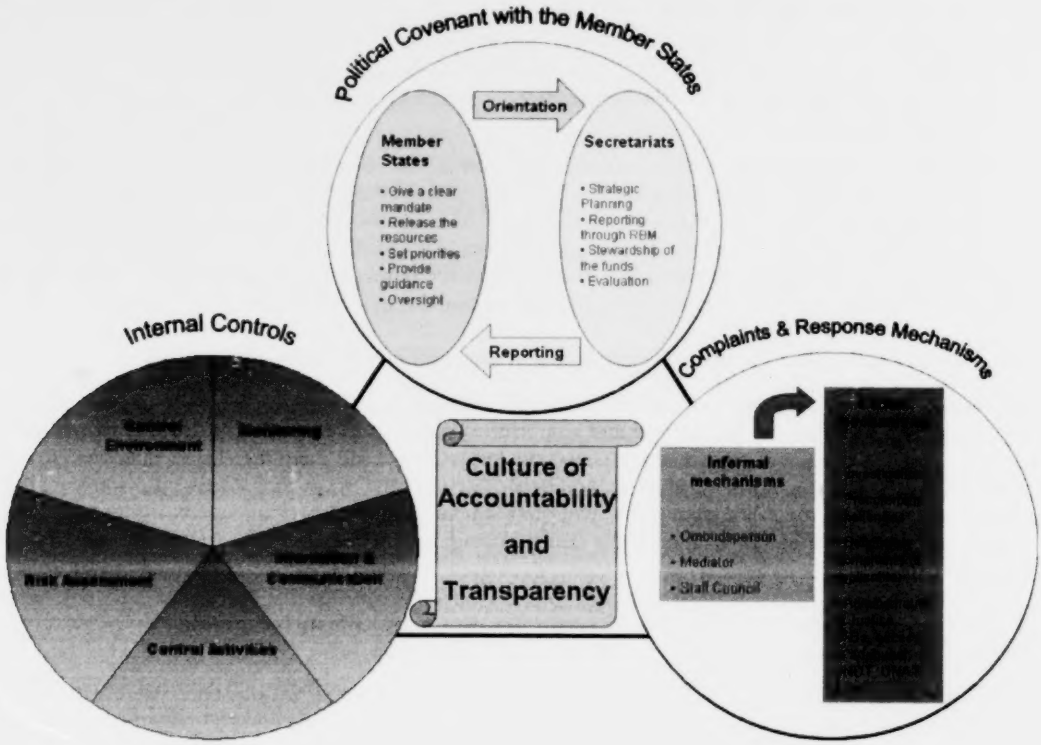
5. Leading by participation - an open dialogue should encourage mutual accountability

38. Participation is key to accountability because it transforms the accountability principle from a personal ethical guideline to a collective tradition, setting the basis for a shared culture of accountability. Ownership is then not only in the hands of management, but on every level. Staff participating in setting up such a culture should feel rewarded and their expertise can be used to improve existing systems. Their experience sheds a different light on existing practices. Management openness to feedback/complaints and the valuing of

participation from member States, staff and the general public is important and sets the tone of the culture of accountability. Some organizations, including UNDP, state that they carry out regular and systematic surveys of development activities, staff perception and client satisfaction to continuously receive feedback with a view to improving current practices. This – if complemented by effective awards and rewards mechanisms – constitutes a great opportunity to initiate cultural change.

39. Figure 2 is an illustration of the components described above, including details of the specific pieces that make up each component.

Figure 2



III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONS' ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS/COMPONENTS MEASURED AGAINST THE BENCHMARKS

A. Accountability component: mutual accountability – political covenant with the member States

Figure 3

40. As outlined in the diagram above, the starting point of accountability in United Nations system organizations is mutual agreement on the strategic plans of the organization and the member States' political will to provide the resources necessary for the delivery of those results. Member States are also responsible for providing a clear mandate and setting priorities for the organization. Member States also play a role in oversight matters through entities such as the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU); furthermore, as noted in the JIU report, "Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations system organizations",[31] Member States are also responsible for performance assessment of the executive heads. The Inspector realized that few organizations had included this in their frameworks or internal documents. Although acknowledged in interviews, many organizations seem to shy away from including this in writing. The United Nations, UNDP, UNICEF and World Food Programme (WFP) have all put political agreement or "covenant" with member States at the centre of their accountability architecture. **This is commendable and the Inspector recommends that organizations which have not yet developed an accountability framework emulate United Nations, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP practice on including a political covenant in their frameworks.** Interestingly, as it is, IFRC, IOM, UNAIDS, UNDP and Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have included their accountability towards beneficiaries as an explicit stakeholder in the accountability of the organization.

41. The following benchmarks have been identified as a measurement of the accountability framework in this area. These benchmarks are valid for the organization. Member States' responsibilities and engagement are not explicitly assessed in this report since this would go beyond its scope. However such references are mentioned indirectly where applicable. The Inspector would like to flag the issue of member States' accountability on oversight as an issue that bears further discussion.

[31] JIU/REP/2009/8. See paras. 11, 117, 118-120.

Benchmark 1: A clear framework for accountability is in place, including a definition thereof and clarity of responsibility for the overall implementation of the framework, linking all components together.

Tools:

a. Framework policy document
b. Definition of accountability
c. Roles and responsibilities of senior management, line department and staff
d. Policy document available on the website and for staff
e. Framework contains key components of accountability

Strengths of existing frameworks

42. Through the questionnaire responses and interviews, varying degrees of practice on the issue of an accountability framework policy or document were found. ILO, UNDP,[32] UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS and World Health Organization (WHO) all have an explicit stand-alone accountability framework document. In addition, under the United Nations Secretariat umbrella, some secretariat entities, ECE,[33] UNEP[34] and UNHCR[35] have developed a specific accountability framework for their internal use. With the exception of that of WHO, all of the frameworks contain a clear definition of accountability. The United Nations[36] has proposed through the Secretary-General's report[37] an accountability framework which was taken note of by the General Assembly in A/RES/65/259. The United Nations has included the accountability framework on its website "Accountability A to Z" and the framework is widely communicated to staff members. A website analysis of the organizations listed above found that ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, and UNOPS had an accountability web page for the public. The UNOPS accountability framework was accessible on this page.[38] **The Inspector encourages organizations to put the said document on a dedicated page on their websites and intranet to enhance transparency of the organization to the public stakeholders.**

43. Further, in many of the organizations mentioned above, staff members interviewed professed varying degrees of awareness on accountability. Some staff members inquired about "accountability." **These organizations should make the framework accessible and executive heads should call town hall meetings to regularly discuss accountability issues with staff with a view to creating an enabling environment for the culture of accountability.**

44. The existing frameworks are comprehensive and well thought out. The process of developing these frameworks was through dialogue, discussions and participation from all sectors of the organizations, including staff members.

45. Some of these framework documents have been presented and endorsed by their legislative bodies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNOPS). It should be noted that a comparison was conducted against the accountability framework documents of the organization and any annexes listed in the framework only. This means that some organizations may have the elements considered as key components/benchmarks in place but that they are not reflected in their accountability framework document. This "tick-box" approach does not necessarily reflect the **level of implementation** of the different components in place, nor does it represent a precise measurement of the culture of accountability across the organizations.

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[32] UNDP has an accountability system which comprises the accountability framework and oversight policy.
[33] ECE developed an accountability framework in response to an OIOS recommendation. The framework was adopted on 7 October 2011.
[34] The UNEP framework is a programme framework which contains elements only pertaining to its programmatic work as they would fall under the scope of the United Nations Secretariat's framework.
[35] The UNHCR Global Management Accountability Framework maps accountabilities, responsibilities and authorities across the entire organization at the country, regional and headquarters levels for 11 key areas of UNHCR work. They also have in place a complaint system for their beneficiaries. They also fall under the overall United Nations Secretariat framework. It is thus not treated as a separate framework in this report.
[36] This framework would cover UNODC and ITC as reported by these organizations.
[37] A/64/640.
[38] By searching on the website one could find the UNFPA framework amongst the governing body and legislative body documents.

46. The accountability frameworks of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, at the request of their Executive Board, were aligned, and utilized harmonized definitions although the completeness of the frameworks varies amongst the three organizations. The UNICEF framework is similar to those of UNDP and UNOPS and uses the same harmonized definitions. Despite the statement in the UNDP framework that the definitions are harmonized[39] with UNFPA and UNOPS, UNFPA used a different definition for accountability from the organizations mentioned above (see annex I for a list of definitions as found in the frameworks).

47. Few of the frameworks made explicit reference to a culture of accountability, that is, transparency and information disclosure to the public and to beneficiaries/stakeholders. The UNDP and UNICEF frameworks are good examples of strong language on the culture of accountability, whereas UNOPS and the proposed United Nations framework pay limited attention to transparency which could be strengthened. UNOPS has an information disclosure policy but does not mention the culture of accountability or the importance of management leadership in accountability whereas the proposed United Nations framework describes accountability and the role of senior management in embedding the culture in the organization but lacks reference to an information disclosure policy.

48. In the area of political covenant with member States (top circle of the Inspectors' illustration of key components of an accountability framework) UNDP, UNICEF and the proposed United Nations frameworks provide a clear definition of accountability and a framework for its implementation. Their frameworks all mention the role of member States and the fact that RBM must align unit and individual work plans. Further, the role of evaluations in these frameworks is prominent as well as the necessity to communicate its results to the member States, general public and other stakeholders. The ILO accountability framework lacked a mention of the accountability of the tripartite partners and did not refer to communication to the public on the results of the organization although in practice ILO does have an established reporting process. The frameworks of UNOPS, UNFPA and WHO were found to have significant weaknesses in this area, particularly on accountability of the member States and communicating the outcomes of the organizational activities and results to the public and other stakeholders. Further, WHO did not have a clear definition of accountability in its framework.

49. Two organizational frameworks were found to have strong internal control systems as documented in the framework. The proposed United Nations framework and the UNOPS framework had most of the internal control components/benchmarks as identified by the Inspector. Neither framework mentioned the internal certification/letters of assurance benchmark, although the United Nations[40] has such a system in place. ILO also scored highly on internal controls but lacked information on internal and external information mechanisms. Interestingly, the United Nations included references to both awards and disciplinary measures in its proposed framework as an important aspect of accountability. Other frameworks mention sanctions and discipline but did not recognize the importance of an awards system to motivate staff members. The proposed United Nations framework is unique in its inclusion of both rewards and discipline. **The United Nations is also the only organization to have included in its framework a system of senior compacts with the Secretary-General to hold senior management accountable for the results achieved/not achieved**.

50. The comparison of the "complaints and response" benchmarks against the seven frameworks concluded that none of the organizations had the full range of complaints and response components in their frameworks. Only ILO, WHO and the proposed United Nations accountability frameworks mention the non-formal complaints system (mediator, ombudsperson, ethics) and only the ILO and the United Nations[41] frameworks partially mention formal mechanisms such as the Administration of Justice. ILO makes reference to investigations in its framework but did not mention an investigation function/office explicitly as part of its accountability framework, and none of the frameworks mentioned a procurement challenge mechanism nor whether the general public, including the beneficiaries, had recourse to any complaints mechanisms.

[39] The UNDP Accountability System – Accountability Framework and Oversight Policy DP/2008/16/rev.1, paras. 2-3.

[40] The letters of assertion are included in the Senior Managers' Compacts with the Secretary-General.

[41] In paragraphs 77-92 of A/64/640 the United Nations framework mentions ombudsman, administration of justice, informal systems of mediation and dispute resolution, formal system of internal justice, tribunals, Office of Legal Affairs and management evaluations. It does not mention mechanisms such as procurement challenges and, beneficiary complaints mechanisms.

51. As can be seen, the strengths of most of the frameworks mentioned above are in the area of internal controls. UNDP[42] and UNFPA have separate internal control documents which are not annexed to its main framework document. All components related to accountability should be easily referenced from the main document.

Weaknesses

52. **Current weaknesses can be seen in a lack of reference and acknowledgement of the importance of a culture of accountability;** that is, an explicit acknowledgement that a framework on paper is not enough and that organizations, and especially their senior managers, must live up to accountability and lead by example. The Inspector found throughout the interviews that, compared to managers, staff members held a poor perception of the strength of the culture of accountability in their organizations as evidenced by the ratings given by them during the interviews. In general the staff rated the culture of accountability between 0 and 2 (from 1 to 4, with 4 being the best) whereas managers gave the culture a rating between 2 and 3.5. The Inspector believes this is an indicator of the perception staff have of the tone at the top and of the culture of accountability (or lack thereof) of their senior managers.

53. **The transparency indicator was evidenced by whether an organization possesses an explicit information disclosure policy.** The area that requires further work is the component of 'Complaints and Response'. When internal controls fail within an organization there must be a mechanism that allows staff, the public, third parties and beneficiaries to submit their grievances/complaints to the organization with a guarantee of confidentiality. An organization cannot profess itself to be accountable to stakeholders if the only recourse for stakeholders to voice their opinion is through legislative bodies. Organizations such as UNDP and UNICEF have strong complaints and response mechanisms in place but they are not necessarily reflected in their accountability frameworks. The Inspector fully acknowledges that UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNOPS can be considered good examples in the United Nations system in the field of accountability and that their frameworks may not necessarily reflect recent extensive efforts made in implementing accountability measures. **It is recommended that the respective accountability frameworks be updated to truly reflect all the good initiatives taking place within the organizations.** The United Nations, as a relative newcomer to accountability frameworks, made a step forward by incorporating the lessons of the other organizations and reflecting on how to improve upon the framework of its predecessors. **The Secretariat should prepare its next version of the accountability framework to include in it a more powerful message on its commitment to transparency and to include components on how it would consider complaints from stakeholders and respond to them.**

54. Other organizations have informed the Inspector that they have various components of an accountability framework or internal control framework. **The Inspector commends such efforts but feels that improvements should be made, as accountability goes beyond solely financial or internal controls.** A formal framework should be established in one official document that first defines what accountability means to the organization and that brings together all components of accountability so that it can be better communicated to staff and stakeholders. The frameworks should show how they fit and link together. Although this may be a paper exercise, it is worthwhile not only to show the links between the components but as a communication tool to staff members. Below is a summary of the various frameworks/components in place in organizations not having an official documented accountability framework.

[42] The UNDP internal control framework has been revised to better align with COSO and is available on the intranet.

JIU participating organizations without a formal accountability framework[43]

	Components in place	Missing elements of accountability
IAEA	Draft accountability framework. Policies on delegation of authority, financial disclosure, performance assessment and management, reporting mechanisms, standards of integrity and ethical conduct, RBM, administration of justice and oversight.	Clarity of responsibility, cost benefit considerations for investment decisions, ERM, standards of personal accountability, no procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/public complaints system.
ICAO	No framework but has following components: delegation of authority, financial disclosure, performance assessment and management, reporting mechanisms, standards of integrity and ethical conduct, RBM and budgeting, administration of justice and oversight.	Clarity of responsibility, cost-benefit considerations for investment decisions, ERM, standards of personal accountability, no procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/public complaints system.
ITU	No framework but components such as clarity of responsibility, delegation of authority, cost-benefit considerations for investment decisions, financial disclosure, performance assessment and management, standards of integrity and ethical conduct, ERM, RBM, administration of justice and oversight, standards of personal accountability.	No procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/public complaints system.
FAO	Not yet developed but elements are being implemented on strategic frameworks, operational work planning, monitoring and reporting, performance assessment and management, ERM, standards of conduct, anti-fraud, administration of justice, delegations of authority and financial disclosures.	Clarity of responsibility and standards of accountability, RBM, cost benefit considerations for investment decisions (under preparation), ERM (under preparation) and standards of personal accountability, ethics office, no procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/public complaints system.
UNAIDS	Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF), which includes goals, targets and results, with indicators to measure and show progress. The framework is an RBM instrument and not an accountability framework as described by JIU.	For many of the components UNAIDS follows the WHO policies but not the WHO accountability framework. No procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/ public complaints system.
UNESCO	UNESCO has an internal control policy, established tables of delegated authority, RBM, performance evaluation, oversight committees, an ethics function, financial disclosure policy and a whistle-blower policy.[44] There is a covenant with member States on the strategic framework.	No procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/public complaints system.
UNIDO	An internal control framework and policies on: delegation of authority financial disclosure, performance assessment and management, reporting, standards of integrity and ethical conduct, RBM, Administration of Justice and oversight, standards of personal accountability.	ERM is under development, no beneficiary/public complaints system.
UNWTO	Second draft of White Paper describes organizational components linked to accountability but no formal accountability framework. Has alignment of framework with organizational goals, clarity of responsibility, delegation of authority, performance monitoring, reporting mechanisms, standards of integrity and ethical conduct, RBM, administration of justice, internal oversight.	Cost-benefit considerations for investment decisions, financial disclosure, ERM, standards of personal accountability, no procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/public complaints system.
UPU	No framework but has the following: clarity of responsibility, delegation of authority, financial disclosure, performance assessment and management, reporting, standards of integrity and ethical conduct, ERM, RBM, administration of justice and oversight.	Cost-benefit considerations for investment decisions, standards of personal accountability, complaints and response mechanisms, beneficiary/public complaints system.

[43] The Inspector determined the formal accountability frameworks through desk review and on the basis of questionnaire responses from the organizations themselves. Only organizations which responded to the JIU questionnaire are listed below.

[44] UNESCO Presentation to RIAS, 5th Annual Meeting, 42nd Plenary, 22 September 2011, Paris. Slide 3.

	Components in place	Missing elements of accountability
WFP	Internal control framework based on COSO model. There is a clear conceptual framework for strengthening managerial control and accountability.	Definition of accountability and how the components fit together No systematic beneficiary/public con.plaints system.
WIPO	Development of a comprehensive accountability framework is to be addressed as part of its Strategic Realignment Programme. Clarity of responsibility, delegation of authority, cost-benefit considerations for investment decisions, financial disclosure, performance assessment and management, standards of integrity and ethical conduct, ERM, RBM, administration of justice and oversight, standards of personal accountability.	No procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/public complaints system.
WMO	No formal accountability framework exists but there are policies relating to clarity of responsibility, delegation of authority, cost-benefit considerations for investment decisions, financial disclosure, performance assessment and management, standards of integrity and ethical conduct, ERM, RBM, administration of justice and oversight, standards of personal accountability.	No procurement challenge mechanism or beneficiary/public complaints system.

55. The organizations without a framework are lacking in the area of mutual accountability and in the complaints and response mechanism area. This is similar to the weaknesses seen in organizations that do have an accountability framework.

56. WFP deserves special mention for having a strong internal control framework which covers many of the aspects of the key accountability components identified. This should be packaged in a way that would facilitate sharing and communicating its accountability structure to the staff and the outside public. The accompanying "Managers' Guide to Internal Control"[45] is also a commendable document which includes a strong emphasis on the culture of accountability and the need for managers to take the lead in setting the tone at the top.

The implementation of the following recommendation will ensure enhanced accountability:

Recommendation 1: Executive heads of United Nations system organizations that have not yet developed stand-alone accountability frameworks should do so as a matter of priority inspired by the benchmarks contained in this report

Benchmark 2: RBM is operational and coherent with organizational mandates and objectives, and cascades down into unit and personal work plans.

Tools:

a. Strategic plans
b. Unit work plans
c. Personal work plans

57. The above benchmark encompasses the benchmarks proposed by the 2006 JIU report.[46] RBM is defined as "a management approach aimed at changing the way organizations operate, with improving performance (achieving results) as the central orientation".[47] RBM is the essential tool to support mutual accountability between member States and organizations. RBM brings together the priorities, resources, strategic planning and stewardship of funds. The 2006 JIU report on RBM found that "[a]nother major methodological shortfall in the

[45] Managers' Guide to Internal Control WFP's Guide to Internal Control for Managers by Resource management and Accountability Department, May 2011.
[46] This benchmark has compressed benchmarks 2, 4, 5 and 8 proposed by the JIU review on RBM 2006 for the purpose of the accountability review. The benchmarks in the JIU review JIU/2006/6 remain valid.
[47] JIU RBM Report (JIU/REP/2006/6).

implementation of RBM is that the objectives set at the top of the Organization are not linked to those at lower levels ...".[48] **Coherence should be established between the highest objective down to those in individual staff work plans, otherwise there can be no personal accountability.** Each staff member, no matter where in the organizational structure, should have a clear idea of how his/her work supports the highest organizational objectives, what she/he is expected to deliver and the timeframe in which she/he is expected to deliver outputs.

58. Most organizations surveyed reported that RBM was in place or in the process of being implemented. Some organizations informed the Inspector that implementation of RBM and its linkages to performance management have just started. This is an excellent initiative and implementation linkages should be sought without delay. **However, many respondents informed the Inspector that resource constraints continued to be an obstacle for its full implementation. Both organizations and member States remain committed to continuing implementation of RBM in order not to lose the momentum gained**.

59. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) review on results-based management[49] concluded the following: "OIOS concludes that although aspirational results are utilized to justify approval of budgets, the actual attainment or non-attainment of results is of no discernible consequence to subsequent resource allocation or other decision-making and that "the "culture" of the Organization will not be changed by data collection efforts of "practitioners" within the Secretariat. If results actually produced do not guide General Assembly decision-making and if simultaneously there is no relaxation of process controls, results-based management will continue to be an administrative chore of no real utility." UNRWA further noted that for the success of RBM it was necessary to gain buy-in from all stakeholders. These highlight the importance of the role member States play through the legislative bodies to ensure that required resources are allocated for the priorities they identify. In this case RBM can fulfil its true purpose.

The implementation of the following recommendation will contribute to enhanced efficiency.

Recommendation 2: The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations, which have not yet done so, should take decisions based on a results-based management approach and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to implement the organizations' strategic plans and results-based management.

60. The organization is responsible for continuously evaluating its processes, activities and achievements in order to provide credible information on its efficiency, effectiveness and impact of their activities. Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations should be fed back into the planning loop to ensure that the organization is constantly learning and improving planning, design and processes for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. All organizations should have a designated evaluation function with a clear evaluation policy providing direction on evaluations. The evaluation policy should cover both independent and self-evaluations. Self-evaluations are an important managerial tool as important as independent evaluations. Organizations should strive to create a culture where evaluations are seen as learning tools supporting the achievement of the organizational objectives.

Benchmark 3: Organizations conduct credible, utilization-focused evaluations and communicate the findings, conclusions and recommendations to stakeholders.

Tools: Evaluation function exists, whether as an independent office, part of oversight or other planning, management units or unit work plans.

61. In 2007 the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) conducted a survey of the evaluation functions and policies in the United Nations system organizations. The study found that FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNIDO, United Nations, UNODC, WHO, WIPO, WMO have a centralized evaluation function. The study further found that ICAO, IAEA and UPU have an evaluation function embedded

[48] "Results-based management in the United Nations in the context of the reform process." (JIU/REP/2006/6, p. 9, para. 39).
[49] "Review of results-based management at the United Nations" (A/63/268, p. 2, section C).

within management and operational structures.[50] IMO, ITU and UNWTO were found not to have an evaluation function in place.

Benchmark 4: Organizations have an effectively implemented established information disclosure policy whereby the results of the organization's activities are communicated regularly to legislative organs, member States and other stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries and the general public.

Tools:

a. Information disclosure policy
b. Consolidated annual financial reports
c. Programme results
d. Evaluation and audit results

62. The organizations have a responsibility towards member States, stakeholders, donors and beneficiaries as well as the general public to whom organizations are stewards of their funds to report not only on what the organizations have achieved with their resources but how this was done. This in many United Nations system organizations takes the form of annual reporting to the legislative bodies. The organizations should also transparently report on the findings, conclusions and recommendations of audits and their follow-up on recommendations provided by internal and external oversight. It is worth noting that JIU is mandated, in conformity with its Statute, to undertake, inter alia, United Nations system-wide evaluations, together with inspections and investigations.[51]

63. The review found that organizations possess strong reporting mechanisms for reporting to their legislative bodies and that there are no identifiable gaps in this area. The level of information and types of reports that are communicated differ from one organization to another and by preference of certain donors. With the implementation of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) norms, organizations will be reporting on annual financial statements. The Inspector was informed that, although independent evaluations may be distributed widely, there was a perceived gap in the wide distribution of self-evaluation reports. ESCWA started to publish an Annual Report on Evaluation in April 2011. The report analyses discretionary self-evaluations undertaken during the year and makes recommendations for the enhancement of performance at the organizational level. WFP provides a separate report on evaluations, including self-evaluation results, to its executive board and ILO reported that they intend to publish the findings of self-evaluation reports to the Evaluation Advisory Committee and to its Governing Body.[52]

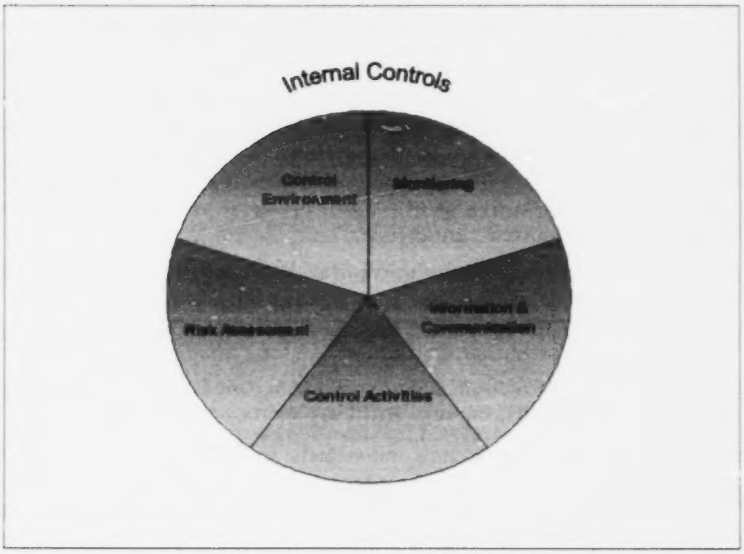
The implementation of the following recommendation will ensure greater controls.

Recommendation 3: Executive heads should incorporate evaluation, including self-evaluation results, in their annual reporting to legislative bodies.

[50] United Nations Evaluation Group Evaluations in the United Nations system (UNEG/REF(2007)3, para. 16, p. 5).
[51] Chapter 4 of the JIU Statute.
[52] Results Based Strategies 2011-2015 Evaluation Strategy Strengthening the Use of Evaluations GB.310/PFA/4/1 (REV1). March 2011 Governing Body 310 Session. para. 21.

B. Accountability component: internal controls

Figure 4



64. Internal controls are developed by the organization to ensure not only that results are achieved but that they are achieved in line with organizational regulations and rules, policies, and ethical and integrity standards. As shown above, internal controls are made up of five components.

Internal control component: control environment

65. The first of these components, the **control environment,** sets the tone of an organization, influencing the consciousness of its staff members. It is where the standards for behaviour/performance are spelt out with awards for good behaviour/performance and discipline for poor ones. Administrative processes such as human resources policies fit under this section. The control environment supports the enabling of a culture of accountability in the organization.

66. This section on control environment consists of five benchmarks dealing with ethics and integrity, discipline and awards, and human resources policies.

a. Ethics and integrity

The following benchmark aims to focus on general ethics and conduct of staff.

Benchmark 5: Ethical conduct, standards of integrity, anti-corruption and anti-fraud policies are in place and enforced.

Tools:

a. Staff regulations/code of conduct for staff members, including harassment
b. Ethics function
c. Gifts, favours and hospitality policy
d. Protection against retaliation for reporting wrongdoing (whistle-blower policy)
e. Outside activities policy (conflict of interest)
f. Anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy
g. Training

67. The main reference document for staff code of conduct is the "Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service"[53] of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). The Code established and endorsed in 2001 does not include accountability issues but touches on important cultural elements of accountability such as openness and transparency when dealing with external stakeholders. The code of conduct includes specific standards on harassment, conflict of interest, outside activities, gifts, favours and hospitality.

68. The JIU report on "Ethics in the United Nations system"[54] found that IAEA, ICAO, IMO, UNIDO, UNWTO, WHO, and WIPO[55] did not possess an ethics function with an ethics policy. This is an important function which is often tasked by the organization to deal with claims of retaliation for reporting wrongdoing. Since the issuance of the above-mentioned report, ICAO, UNIDO, WIPO and WHO have established an ethics function. **The Inspector reiterates the recommendation made in the JIU Ethics report that "legislative bodies should direct their respective executive heads to put forward proposals for the establishment of an ethics function in line with the JIU suggested standards".[56]**

69. All participating organizations have a gifts, favours and hospitality policy in place, although such policies differ between organizations that have a zero-tolerance policy and those that have a policy which allows staff members to accept gifts of a nominal value. The JIU Note entitled "Procurement Reform in the United Nations system organizations"[57] found that the definition of nominal value diverged greatly, with the lowest value being US$20 up to SwF 300 for UPU. **The Inspector recommends that the United Nations system organizations should harmonize the definition of the gifts, favours and hospitality policy in order to ensure coherence.**

70. Regarding the existence of a policy protecting individuals from retaliation for reporting misconduct or supporting an investigation: CTBTO, ICAO, ILO, FAO, United Nations, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UPU, WFP, UNRWA, WHO, and UNHCR have a whistle-blower protection policy.[58] However, interviews indicated that the effectiveness of the policy was in question especially from the perspective of the staff. When managers were asked about the whistle-blower policy and any identified weaknesses most of them stated that the number of complaints the investigation function received since the introduction of the whistle-blower policy was an indicator that the policy was working well. However, staff council/union members' answers varied. The majority of staff council representatives interviewed informed the Inspector that the policy was in place but was either unknown to staff or staff were hesitant to whistle-blow due to the question of confidentiality in the investigation processes. Further, they stated that the policy did not take into account soft retaliation measures which could be inflicted on the staff concerned in subtle ways, at times years after the reporting had taken place.

71. A more worrying issue was the lack of recourse once retaliation had taken place. There have been several high profile cases within the United Nations system where individuals who reported wrongdoing were sanctioned by being dismissed or their contracts not renewed or not promoted. These high profile cases show that once the retaliation has occurred the organization would not do much to correct and/or reverse them. The administrative tribunal concerned has awarded monetary compensation to individuals. However, thus far not one single staff member has been reinstated; showing that once the work environment has deteriorated it is not possible to reinstate the staff member. Unfortunately these high profile cases are well known by the staff members and seem to be serving as a bad example and implicit warning of what will happen if a staff member does report misconduct. **The Inspector was troubled by the perspectives of the staff members and suggests oversight bodies to look into the effectiveness of the whistle-blower policies and take a hard look at how the mechanisms behind the policy could be strengthened with a view to guaranteeing the independence and, transparency of investigations in retaliation cases (without jeopardizing anonymity) and to ensuring consistency in its application.**

[53] January 2002. The previous version, Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service, was prepared in 1954.
[54] Ethics in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2010/3).
[55] WIPO informed the Inspector through the questionnaire (March 2011) that a Code of Ethics was in progress.
[56] Ethics in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2010/3, p. 4) and the suggested standards can be found in Box 1 of the same page.
[57] Procurement Reform in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/NOTE/2011/1).
[58] WIPO informed the Inspector that it is currently working on establishing a whistle-blower policy.

72. Outside activities or conflict of interest policies exist in almost all the United Nations organizations interviewed. They refer to conflict of financial interests as well as declaration of any outside activities that may conflict with codes/standards as an international civil servant. It is to be noted that no real issues in the context of accountability were raised by the organizations' officials on this topic.

73. The Inspector was surprised however to learn about the dearth of organizations with an anti-fraud/anti-corruption policy in place. FAO, ILO, ITC, ITU, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNIDO, UNOPS, WFP and WHO all have a stand-alone anti-fraud policy in place. United Nations, UNEP, and UNODC do not have a formal anti-fraud policy but have many of the elements of such a policy. UNESCO and WIPO informed the Inspector that they are currently in the process of developing such a comprehensive policy. **The Inspector suggests that executive heads of organizations which do not have such a consolidated policy develop one at an early date.**

74. Although it was found that UNHCR did not have one comprehensive anti-fraud policy, it is noted here for good practice for its commitment to accountability towards its beneficiaries by having developed specific anti-fraud guidelines and policies on resettlement fraud, registration of refugees and other persons of concern, and in areas related to administration (supply, human resources, finance, etc.).

Good Practice: UNHCR Anti-fraud on Resettlement:[59] Anti-fraud guidelines and policies on the consequences of resettlement fraud have been identified as one of the important developments and issues to be included in the revised Resettlement Handbook.[60] It is an awareness-raising tool to detect symptoms or "red flags" that may indicate the presence of fraud and pursue these until fraud is proven or otherwise. UNHCR has established a policy to safeguard the integrity of the resettlement programme and of UNHCR operations in general by enhancing the effectiveness of the response to resettlement fraud perpetrated by refugees.[61] The policy is intended to bring about a deterrent and preventative effect to fraud as well as to ensure that persons not eligible for resettlement do not benefit from this durable solution. It also seeks to systematize and bring consistency to the sanctions currently being taken in the field.

b. Discipline and awards

Benchmark 6: Failure to comply with enforced policies/regulations results in clear consequences. Sanctions shall be clear and proportional and implemented at all levels. In addition, outstanding performance should be acknowledged by recognition/awards/rewards.

Tools:

a. Policy documents on sanctions and disciplinary action
b. Publication in annual reports of sanctions imposed by the Executive Head
c. Awards/rewards programmes decided by committees/panels based on clear criteria
d. Publication of the names of staff members receiving awards and rewards

75. One very simple and outward sign of accountability is to discipline/sanction staff who fail to abide by the policies and mandates of the organization. All United Nations system organizations under the scope of the present review informed the Inspector that they have procedures and guidelines for disciplinary action. However a common complaint, in some cases amounting to despair, echoed by many interviewees was that the United Nations system as it currently stood had neither an effective "carrot" nor "stick" to motivate and/or deter staff. This benchmark makes for an interesting case study to illustrate that such a policy may be in place in theory but it is not functioning in practice.

[59] 2010 Resettlement Fraud: A Tool to Help Offices Assess Their Exposure and Vulnerability (Annex 3 to the 2008 Baseline Standard Operating Procedures on Resettlement).
[60] 2011 Revision of the 2004 UNHCR Resettlement Handbook.
[61] 2008 Policy and Procedural Guidelines: Addressing Resettlement Fraud Perpetrated by Refugees.

76. Regarding disciplinary sanction practices, this study noted that in some organizations, although guidelines existed on paper, there have been no disciplinary cases or a limited number of measures imposed on staff in the last 3-5 years. Without the "stick" it would be difficult for organizations to hold staff members accountable and it would be difficult for managers to communicate to the staff that the management takes misconduct seriously. Various reasons were mentioned for why some organizations never or rarely imposed sanctions on staff members. The first was that the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) and the ILO Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) required a high burden of proof on par with criminal cases.[62] A second reason often noted by the interviewees was the perception that the management would allow those accused of misconduct to "resign" or "retire". The perception of staff was often that the higher the position held, the more staff was protected and able to avoid formal disciplinary measures. Staff members informed the Inspector of various anecdotal cases of unfairness as to how sanctions were imposed at various staff levels. It was found that some organizations, such as UNDP, take these matters somewhat seriously. **The Inspector concludes that a future evaluation of the effectiveness of accountability frameworks/components should analyse the disciplinary actions of organizations by grade level.**

77. In some cases the misconduct is serious enough to warrant referral to the national authorities for criminal misconduct prosecutable under national laws. The Inspector was informed that the Secretariat's Office of Legal Affairs covering all United Nations funds and programmes[63] had referred 23 cases, of which two-thirds were staff misconduct, to the national authorities. A specialized agency stated that it had not referred any cases to national authorities in the past five years despite having grounds to do so. The reason for non-referral was given as the issue of immunity. **The Inspector is of the opinion that this is not an obstacle: if the relevant national laws exist, immunity can and should be lifted.** Another stated that there have been cases of fraud but that the monetary loss was too slight to warrant a referral to national authorities and was not worth the potential threat to the immunity of the organization. Thus they had preferred to handle the situation within the organization.

78. Even in cases where national referrals occurred, the follow-up by some national authorities was found to be poor. The organization in such cases could dismiss the staff member but could do nothing further. As the document, "Practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour", 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011 notes, "... eight cases involving credible allegations of criminal conduct by United Nations officials or experts on mission were referred to Member States. The Secretary-General is not aware of any action taken in respect of such cases by the Member States concerned."[64] **In this context the Inspector invites member States concerned to play their part in the creation/upholding of a culture of accountability. It was at the urging of the General Assembly that all staff members are kept informed of the examples of misconduct. Member States then must also uphold their side of the accountability. As long as staff continue to see examples of exceptions and unfair application of disciplinary measures, the culture of accountability within an organization will remain fragile.**

79. Although due to the scope of the present review the Inspector is unable to confirm with quantitative statistics whether these perceptions are true, the perception alone can be considered damaging to the culture of accountability. It is noted that the views above were shared almost universally by organizations' staff representatives. As for the culture of accountability and staff members' feeling accountable at the personal level, the perceptions above are an indication of a serious lack of accountability in some United Nations organizations.

80. One way to alleviate the negative perception of staff members regarding fairness of disciplinary measures is to annually publish a list of all formal disciplinary actions imposed on staff. The list should protect the confidentiality of the person in question but be clear about the sanctionable offence committed, grade level of the staff if possible and the sanction imposed. Such a list serves four purposes: (1) transparency is enhanced within the organization and clarifies to staff that sanctions are imposed at all levels (or not); (2) it shows that sanctions are proportional to the misconduct and do not relate to the position held in the organization; (3) the list

[62] FAO drew the attention of the team to the fact that their review of ILOAT case law revealed that it does not tend to be more favourable to plaintiffs than to organizations.
[63] Covers UNDP, UNHCR, UNOPS and UNFPA amongst others.
[64] ST/IC/2011/20, para. 72.

constitutes an awareness-raising tool for staff with regard to sanctionable offences; (4) assistance in setting the level of sanction based on past precedents. Proportionality must be maintained.

81. As examples of good practice,[65] FAO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, the United Nations and WFP are to be commended for ensuring that the executive head's practices in disciplinary matters are published and thus known to all staff. The United Nations at the request of the General Assembly in resolution 59/287, paragraph 17, through information circulars publishes a list of sanctions imposed by the Secretary-General by type of misconduct with a short description of the offence and the exact discipline imposed. This is an example that should be emulated. Such a list should be available to the legislative bodies.

82. The Inspector was informed by UNDP officials that they plan to go further than the current practice of publishing sanctions on the intranet and to make these truly public by publishing a list on the website. The legal department in UNDP has agreed that this list should include not only disciplinary measures but also information on those found to have committed misconduct and resigned (currently this does not appear on any of the published lists, with the exception of WFP, and is not counted as a disciplinary action) and that the list would include non-staff such as contractors and consultants. **The Inspector holds the commitment of UNDP to transparency and openness on this issue as a beacon which other organizations should follow. ILO informed the Inspector that it considered the publishing of such lists to risk compromising the duty of the organization to its staff members in relation to respect for their dignity and related duty of confidentiality. As the Inspector calls upon organizations to ensure anonymity of those sanctioned in the lists the Inspector questions this viewpoint, which is contrary to the trend practised by organizations which aspire to transparency at all levels of the organization.**

The implementation of the following recommendation will enhance dissemination of best practice and enhance controls and compliance.

Recommendation 4: Executive heads of organizations which have not yet done so should inform their staff members on his/her decisions on disciplinary measures imposed on staff by publishing lists (in annexes to the annual reports and on a website) describing the offence and measures taken while ensuring anonymity of the staff member concerned.

83. One manifestation of personal accountability is encouraged by awards/rewards/ motivational tools and heightened by a disciplinary/sanction mechanism. Interviewees lamented that there was no tangible way to motivate staff through awards/rewards in the United Nations system. The Inspector was informed by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) that it was looking into this issue, which would cover the whole of the United Nations system.[66]

84. Some rewards do exist in the form of a step increase or accelerated personal promotions. However the Inspector learned from the interviews that the step increase which may have been used by some organizations as conditional on good performance has been corrupted in practice as an automatic annual increase.[67] Personal promotions were rarely used in the system and HR managers and staff representatives informed the Inspector that there was a quota imposed in some cases of only two personal promotions a year. In the absence of such formal rewards for excellent performance, ad hoc motivational tools were used by some organizations. ITU and WFP had pilot tested bonuses given to staff members with exceptional performance; however they found that this was

[65] The organizations mentioned, with the exception of UNHCR, publish this information annually. UNHCR publishes the information biannually.

[66] The ICSC 2011 Annual Report (A/66/30) proposed a new framework promoting "a 'culture of appreciation' that would encourage staff members to recognize colleagues for outstanding work or behaviour. It outlined ways of rewarding staff that organizations could adapt to suit their own organizational culture and needs. As requested by the Commission, there were proposals concerning guidelines for the use of merit steps to reward exceptional performance" (p. 23).

[67] UNAIDS informed the Inspector that it exercises the discretion to withhold within-grade increments to under-performing staff members.

resource heavy and that it demoralized other staff members. In both cases the bonus scheme has been abandoned or its continuation is under discussion. The Inspector found the practice of UNRWA on this issue to be an example of good practice. The agency has addressed the idea of recognizing outstanding performance (with both monetary and non-monetary rewards and awards) and has established guidelines on rewards and recognition which are incorporated in its human resource policy framework.

85. The most utilized "soft" reward was training opportunities to staff members. There were various examples given of organizations which granted staff members with exceptional performance to get on-the-job training by going to a field office for some weeks or special mission opportunities for professional development. The Chief Executive Board **(CEB) through the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) should come up with an awards/rewards mechanism applicable to the system. However, the Inspector cautions against using formal training as a blanket "reward", since staff members are already entitled to a certain number of training days per year.** Training opportunities should not become an award offered only to those with exceptional performance. The Inspector was informed of awards granted to staff members who exceeded performance expectations or who excelled in innovation or team work. PAHO, UNIDO, United Nations and WFP all had awards mechanisms that recognized individual staff or team excellence. The more sophisticated award programmes have specific criteria, a committee to make the award decisions and a formal award ceremony broadcast live to all offices and field locations. The Inspector recognizes that organizations are having to implement such motivational measures under harsh resource constraints and commends the creative initiatives taken by these organizations.

The implementation of the following recommendation will enhance dissemination of best practice.

Recommendation 5: Executive heads should instruct their human resources divisions to put mechanisms in place for recognizing outstanding performance by developing creative ways and means to motivate staff through awards, rewards, and other incentives.

c. Human resources policies

86. In order to maintain an environment where internal controls are respected and to showcase the management's philosophy on accountability, strict policies on recruitment and staff selection are needed. There are a myriad of human resource policies in place within the United Nations system's organizations. Those which concern the control environment are related to job descriptions and work plans which lead to performance assessments and therefore allow individuals to be held accountable. A second set of policies under this component are those on recruitment, which allow the enabling environment to ensure that staff are selected and recruited according to established procedures.

Benchmark 7: All staff can be held accountable for their work on the basis of up-to-date written job descriptions accurately reflecting their actual work.

Tools:

a. Job description for all staff
b. Coherence between job description and day-to-day work

87. Written job descriptions are a prerequisite to ensure that staff are recruited for the proper posts and that, once recruited, staff members know what they are responsible for. The personal work plan should be based on the unit work plan and must be in line with the job description. If staff members are assigned tasks not in line with their job descriptions then they cannot be held accountable for those tasks. The work plan, performance assessment (discussed under the component on Monitoring below) and the job descriptions are the framework within which an individual staff member shall be found responsible and accountable.

88. The review found that not all organizations require new vacancies to be advertised and accompanied by either a tailored or generic job description at all levels, with the exception of IAEA, whose officials stated that some top managers' posts do not have a written job description. The Inspector finds that it is a good practice to

require a job description for recruitment processes. However organizations must not look at job descriptions as a one-off event, rather job descriptions need to be continuously updated for long-serving staff members as well. Following current practice in the United Nations system organizations, a staff member only receives a job description when recruited, or after applying for a new position. However, what of long-serving staff members who were subject to lateral mobility and received their job descriptions 7-10 years ago? Technological advances may have made some of their tasks obsolete or they have upgraded their skills to keep pace with changes, but have their job descriptions been updated to reflect this situation? The Inspector calls on human resource managers to reflect on this issue and encourage a more proactive approach to issuing updated job descriptions that accurately reflect the activities the staff member actually engages in as appropriate.

89. Although staff members may possess a fairly up-to-date job description, there must be coherence between what the job description lists and their day-to-day work. In certain organizations working in conflict/humanitarian operations, priorities and objectives are subject to short-term changes. How do organizations reflect such changes in the work of the staff member? Some organizations noted that they have a budget which covers such emergencies and that their objectives were worded in general terms such that a revision of work plans was not required. From the interviewee responses it did not seem that organizations had found a solution to making sure the job descriptions and the work plans were aligned with the shifting priorities of the organizations. This will be explored further in the Monitoring component below.

Benchmark 8: Concretization of policies on selection, recruitment and post-employment.

Tools:

a. Recruitment policy restricting hiring of family members and relatives
b. Post-employment restrictions for staff who retire/resign from the organization

90. In its Programme of Work 2011, JIU is conducting a follow-up on the implementation of the benchmarking framework for the selection and recruitment of staff in the organizations of the United Nations. The review has preliminarily indicated that policies on recruitment, placement and promotion do exist in most organizations, while efforts to assess, update and harmonize these policies are ongoing broad issues being addressed by ICSC, CEB HR Network and JIU as well as OIOS (regarding the United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes staff) and other oversight bodies.[68] In the report "Transparency in the Selection and Appointment of Senior Managers in the United Nations Secretariat",[69] the Inspectors, "... found that a whole group of vacancies for senior field-based positions is not advertised and there are no vacancy announcements or notes verbales sent to member States".[70] The said report recommended to the General Assembly that it should "direct the Secretary-General to follow proposed guidelines in selecting and appointing senior managers in tandem with the process outlined in the Secretary-General's accountability report".[71] Here is an example of how setting the tone at the top would strengthen the overall culture of accountability, including at the bottom, and set the example of how all recruitment within an organization should take place in respect of the provisions of articles 100 and 101 of the United Nations Charter and Staff Regulations and Rules.

91. The Inspector was informed of several examples where in the absence of (or despite) a post-employment restriction policy on staff who have retired or resigned from the organization, these staff members come back to the organization and are placed in the direct line of accountability. This is detrimental to more junior career-minded staff members who are motivated to work for recognition and promotion, but it also places retirees with "nothing to lose" in the direct accountability line. In the words of one of the interviewees, "they are putting in place retired officials in the accountability line who have nothing to lose and who have nothing to gain and they can just walk away when something goes wrong. We have had directors, who retired in [...] who then come back as P-4s or who takes lead [sic] on investigations and this has a detrimental effect on the psyche of career-minded

[68] Terms of Reference Follow-up on the implementation of the benchmarking framework for selection and recruitment of staff in the organizations of the United Nations.
[69] Transparency in the selection and appointment of senior managers in the United Nations Secretariat (JIU/REP/2011/2).
[70] Ibid., para. 57, p. 15.
[71] Ibid., Recommendation 2, p. 24.

professionals".[72] Post-employment restrictions are currently being used by organizations only for procurement staff, to support prevention of procurement irregularities. The JIU note, "Procurement reform in the United Nations system",[73] found that "[o]nly a few of the organizations have put in place clear policy instructions on post-employment restrictions of staff".[74]

Internal control component: risk assessment

92. The second internal control component is risk assessment. Risk assessment within the United Nations system takes the shape of Enterprise Risk Management (ERM), which is defined as "an organization-wide process of structured, integrated and systematic identification, analysis, evaluation treatment and monitoring of risks towards the achievement of organizational objectives."[75] The JIU report entitled "Review of Enterprise Risk Management in the United Nations system: benchmarking framework" concluded that "the United Nations system organizations are at the beginning stages in terms of the adoption and implementation of ERM. Many organizations are either preparing policy and framework documents or undertaking pilot/first phase exercises."

Benchmark 9: Organization has a formal policy on ERM to be implemented with a coherent methodology.

Tools: Risk analysis conducted for each unit/project/process and an organizational risk plan exists

93. As found in the JIU report on ERM in 2010 the practice of ERM cannot yet be considered mature within the United Nations system; however it is presented here as a benchmark for testing the strength of future accountability frameworks. ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, United Nations, UNOPS and WFP have made tremendous efforts to introduce risk management and some of these notable examples are listed here for knowledge sharing to other organizations planning ERM exercises. CTBTO, FAO, ITU, UPU, WHO and WIPO were working on an ERM system and a proposal or policy was in a draft stage. UNWTO stated that the issue of ERM had been reviewed by the Secretariat but it was concluded that it would not be cost-effective for UNWTO to have a formal ERM system. Instead UNWTO reviews significant risks in activities but not through an ERM system.

Good Practices:

WFP established and approved an FRM policy in 2005. ERM is based on a framework and implemented at two levels: observation level and decision-making level. A risk register is used to record risks as they are observed. There are three intermediary stages to consolidate and analyse all their reported risks at the observation level. The risk management focal points escalate the risks to the risk management coordinators, who conduct a portfolio view analysis of risks and deal with risks escalated to the corporate level. Finally, there is an executive management council responsible for aggregating risks at a corporate level and providing information and analysis for the Executive Management Council (EMC). The process of escalation only occurs when the office entity which observed the risk does not have the capacity and the delegated authority for taking decisions on the risk response (mitigation actions).

The United Nations Secretariat has named a focal point responsible for developing the ERM policy document, methodology and accompanying manual. They are currently implementing two pilot ERM assessments in two selected departments of the Secretariat and lessons learned from the pilots will inform the Secretary-General's report on accountability.

[72] Interviewed by the Inspector. Source is anonymous to protect interviewees' identity.
[73] JIU/NOTE/2011/1.
[74] Procurement reforms in the United Nations system (JIU/NOTE/2011/1), chapter on Ethics Management and Vendor Issues, para. 169.
[75] COSO, Enterprise Risk Management Framework-Integrated Framework, appendix E, as it appears in the Review of Enterprise Risk Management in the United Nations system: benchmarking framework (JIU/REP/2010/4 JIU).

Internal control component: control activities

94. This component encompasses all the policies and procedures established to address risks and to achieve the organizations' objectives. They help in ensuring that management directives are carried out and necessary actions are taken to address risks to the achievement of the organization's objectives. Control activities include approvals, authorizations, and reconciliations, review of operating performance, security of assets and segregation of duties. Translated into the context of accountability, this includes systems and frameworks enabling the organization to effectively control the implementation of the accountability control environment. The main risk addressed here is non-accountable behaviour or lack of accountable behaviour.

95. The section on control activities consists of three benchmarks dealing with chain of command and delegation of authority, financial regulations and rules and anti-fraud mechanisms, and internal certification of unit results by all managers on the exercise of internal controls.

Benchmark 10: The chain of command and delegation of authority are aligned, clear, coherent and integrated into existing enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

Tools:

a. Clear definition of delegation of authority
b. Coherence between management line and delegation of authority and clear reporting lines
c. Delegation of authority built into existing ERP systems

96. These control activities are built around the central concept of delegation of authority. In order to avoid micro-management, delegation of authority has to be clearly delineated in all organizations. Real delegation of authority requires an effective devolution of decision-making powers, and should not merely be a decentralization of administrative tasks. JIU has already insisted on this aspect in "Delegation of authority and accountability (part II): series on managing for results in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2004/7).[76] Clear descriptions of who is responsible for what and what thresholds are required to escalate a decision to the top of the hierarchical chain are prerequisites for clear delegation of authority. Regulations, rules and decisions establishing delegation of authority should clearly indicate who is accountable at each step of the organization's activities.

97. Regarding the delegation of authority, it was realized during the interviews that many interviewees perceived a mismatch between authority and responsibility. This may be the case when a staff member has many responsibilities or duties, but not enough delegated authority to decide. In this case, the decision-making process is considerably slowed down since the staff member has to escalate the matter – sometimes through multiple management layers – for a decision to be taken. This often results in frustration and demotivation. However the opposite can also be true, when in some cases managers circumvent their assigned decisional authority in order to speed up some processes. In the Inspector's opinion, these behaviours are a symptom of poorly set-up delegation of authority policies. **No authority should be entrusted to a staff member without responsibility and accountability.**

98. Another issue raised by most participating organizations was the fact that many staff members lacked proper training to know how, when, and where to ask for permission to perform a duty. This is mostly the case for younger professionals (for instance P-2 or P-3 certifying officers), who sometimes fear the amount of authority suddenly invested in them. Some interviewees also felt that management are not supportive enough to back up those young professionals in the event of a decision being challenged and that the current culture of compliance-based accountability paralyzed staff from taking what may end up being the wrong decision.

99. **For the United Nations, delegation of authority constitutes the basis of accountability, and every audit undertaken by OIOS includes a part where proper delegation of authority is verified and assessed. OIOS also identified an increased need to evaluate and monitor delegation of authority in a more consistent and systematic way.**

[76] See JIU/REP/2004/7, p. 2, para. 8.

100. During the interviews, two departments in the United Nations Secretariat strongly advocated the need for a coherent approach to delegation of authority. They provided the Inspector with multiple examples of where the managerial chain of command is not aligned to the delegation of authority and caused many problems in terms of the achievement of the Senior Compacts. This example clearly illustrates the fact that all elements of an accountability framework are intertwined and need to be adapted to each other.

101. PAHO set up a working group to define a clear delegation of authority system through an internal memorandum, which would clarify the role of representatives who control over 70 per cent of finances. The draft template submitted by PAHO is an excellent step forward since it mentions explicitly higher accountability as an underlying principle ("chain of accountability") and establishes "standardized definitions, roles and responsibilities that are to be applied consistently in accordance with the approved policies at all times".[77] Also, authority and responsibility, the two sub-elements of accountability, are mentioned. The definition of responsibility may be too general: this is work in progress and will need further refining.

102. The great organizational complexity of most organizations in the United Nations system, its necessary shift to a more decentralized matrix-structure and combining accountability with multi-agency programmes or projects makes delegation of authority a complex matter. Nevertheless, and as far as accountability is concerned, **there is a need to stress that clearly defined hierarchical lines of authority through a coherent delegation of authority mechanism are key to holding managers and staff accountable**. Otherwise accountability becomes diluted and eventually completely lost, which in turn has a negative effect on staff motivation. Ideally, delegation of authority should be aligned to the direct chain of command.

Good Practice: WHO has fully integrated its delegation of authority mechanisms into its ERP system, even down to the level of multiple sub-delegations. This provides for a very tight control of every step of not only procurement and investments, but also for every step of project management, including human resources decisions.

The following benchmark focuses on financial aspects such as corruption and anti-fraud.

Benchmark 11: Financial regulations and rules (FRR) in the United Nations system organizations should embody anti-fraud and financial misconduct policies and are implemented practically.

Tools:

a. FRR
b. Conflict of interest statements
c. Financial disclosure statements
d. Anti-fraud policies

103. Anti-fraud and conflict of interest policies have already been mentioned in the section related to the control environment. The control activities implementing aforementioned policies are the conflict of interest statements and the financial disclosure statements (FDSs), as well as, in a broader sense, compliance with FRR.

104. While many JIU participating organizations have not implemented an anti-fraud policy, they all acknowledged that they had at least some components of it. United Nations officials stated that anti-fraud was implemented through Secretary-General's bulletins covering various aspects of an anti-fraud policy, mainly document ST/SGB/2005/19 on financial disclosure and declaration of interest statements that covers all staff members from D-1 and above, as well as staff members that have financial responsibility.

105. As found by the JIU Ethics report,[78] when there is an ethics office in place, FDS are often administered by it directly. This is for instance the case at the United Nations, UNDP and WFP. This was identified as best practice, because the ethics office should not only be an informal response mechanism to fraud and other

[77] Draft Delegation of Authority Template for PAHO representatives submitted to the Inspector.
[78] Ethics in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2010/3).

mismanagement issues but also a proactive actor, fully integrated into the organization's daily work. It should not only be enabled to draft policies, but also to enforce them.

106. Some interviewees confessed that, while financial disclosure and/or conflict of interest statements were duly completed by most of the staff required to do so, there was almost no vetting of those statements taking place at any point. So there is no reliable means for the organization to actually detect a priori any conflict of interest. In some organizations the conflict of interest and FDS were only taken out of the drawer and analysed during an investigation, when they were sometimes used as supporting evidence for fraud cases.

107. The Inspector is fully aware that FDS and conflict of interest statements cannot fully prevent fraud, since a declaration – if not fully vetted – depends on its author's honesty. Financial disclosure and conflict of interest statements should be viewed as a measure to mitigate the risk for organizations and increase the risk for staff trying to engage in fraud of being held accountable.

108. **The Inspector suggests that the JIU participating organizations which have not yet, or only partially, implemented financial disclosure and conflict of interest policies should do so expeditiously.**

109. In some organizations huge discrepancies exist between management and staff perception regarding investigations on fraud and corruption. The ramifications of some cases have even led to investigators uncovering entire networks of embezzlement schemes, going up to politically appointed posts and taking place with the involvement of some member States' representatives. While management – with some notable exceptions – consistently minimized the impact of such cases and pointed out that investigations had been conducted according to relevant standards, staff representatives mentioned that, for some serious cases, investigation reports were shelved by some executive heads, or staff members blowing the whistle seriously threatened with non-renewal of contract or other forms of indirect (soft) retaliation. Executive heads always have to strike the balance between protecting the organization's reputation and holding staff engaged in wrongdoing fully accountable for their actions. But in cases where criminal activities come into play, accountability should always be the guiding principle.

110. This is corroborated by the low rankings given by interviewees on their rating of the culture of accountability versus the accountability frameworks. In other words many staff believe that the accountability framework or components are in place but that their implementation as evidenced by the culture in which accountability is applied is weak.

Benchmark 12: Managers attest to compliance with internal controls within the framework of their delegation of authority.

Tool: Letter/form of representation/assurance/attestation submitted annually to the executive head

111. It has been brought to the attention of JIU that EC, ILO, OECD, United Nations, UNESCO and WFP include in their internal controls framework a very strong component to increase accountability of managers. The letter of assertion is a central pillar of accountability for OECD and WFP. In the United Nations through the senior managers' compacts, which are signed annually with the Secretary-General, each senior manager pledges to exercise delegated authority in compliance with the regulations, rules and all relevant policies and guidelines, including appropriate monitoring of staff working under his/her supervision to whom such authority may be further delegated. With the implementation of enterprise risk management, the Secretariat intends to strengthen this assurance by requiring, as part of the senior managers' compacts with the Secretary-General, that each senior manager annually confirm through a Certification Report the establishment and maintenance of a strong internal control environment as a result of the risk assessment process. OIOS informed the Inspector that they are of the opinion that the present JIU report gives too much weight to the Secretary-General's compact in presenting it as a letter of management assertion.

112. The Inspector learned and agrees with OECD, the United Nations and WFP that letters of assertion are a very powerful tool to push accountability down the management line. With this system managers have to demonstrate that they have complied with every applicable regulation and rule. Internal audit can then verify under which conditions the letters have been signed and how significant the controls put in place by managers really are. OECD goes even further by trying to implement ownership of risk management in the letters of

representation. The Inspector finds this letter of assertion to be a strong tool which allows organizations to hold one individual accountable for actions conducted under his/her delegated authority.

113. The present report acknowledges that the letter of assertion is a very compliance-based tool for increasing management accountability. As stated above, accountability has to be fostered by compliance-based mechanisms together with incentives and rewards; compliance being the minimum standard every manager would have to adhere to. The United Nations senior managers' compacts (Under Secretary-General (USG) and Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) levels) already reflect this effort. This element of accountability should be considered as one of the benchmarks for a functioning accountability framework. It has the merit of being transparent, clearly structured and verifiable by internal and external audit. It can also be linked to management compacts and performance appraisals.

Internal control component: information and communication

114. In order for organizations to be accountable they must have a system in place to document and produce reports on operations, finance and non-financial and compliance-related information. In recent years this has been embodied in the form of ERP systems. However, the system of documentation and information dissemination is not limited to an ERP system. There must be transparency of the information being generated both within and outside the organization.

Benchmark 13: Staff at all levels have access to relevant, reliable information that supports decision-making in line with their delegated authorities and the organization has an internal and external communication system.

Tools:

- ERP system or similar in place to capture and document relevant information
- Internal communication channels are fully exploited
- Information disclosure policy in place

115. United Nations system organizations are at various stages of ERP implementation. The implementation of ERP is not uniform in some organizations where ERP only covers headquarters and thus organizations continue to have a fragmented approach to generating comprehensive reports on the overall organization. The Inspector recognizes that ERP is an expensive tool and that it is not for all organizations, especially smaller ones that are unable to justify such costly investments. As long as a system is in place in which information is captured and documented, on the basis of which reliable reports are made for staff and legislative bodies, it should be considered as sufficient.

116. The existence of ERP or other similar systems however is not enough to ensure that information is widely disseminated in a coherent manner. It is important for executive heads to establish clear channels of communication at all staff levels to communicate new revisions to procedures, processes and information that may affect the ability of staff members to carry out their responsibilities. It is regrettable that some executive heads do not regularly meet with the staff members. Although executive heads meet with their senior management group, it was rare for some of them to meet with all staff members in a town hall format or through video conferences with the field. Many staff council representatives also reported that they had not met with their executive heads for several years. The presence and communication of the executive head with staff members is part and parcel of the culture of the organization. More efforts should be made by the executive heads to make time available to meet with the staff of their organizations.

117. Communication to external parties is not limited to presenting annual reports to the legislative bodies; rather the Inspector takes a more expanded view on this issue and sees external communication as being towards all stakeholders, including member States, beneficiaries, the general public and the media. In order to ensure transparency in communication to the public to which the United Nations organizations are stewards of resources,

the Executive head must ensure that there is an information disclosure policy in place. An information disclosure policy must contain:[79]

- ✓ A detailed list of the type of organizational documents that should be made public and narrow conditions for non-disclosure, such as beneficiary data and information;[80]
- ✓ A process for external parties for requesting documents, a timeframe for the request to be treated, and how to appeal if a request is denied.

118. **ILO, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, UNOPS and WFP have an information disclosure policy which contains the above-mentioned points. The Inspector would like to invite these organizations to set the transparency bar higher by publishing a list of denied requests and reasons or at a minimum, as is current UNDP practice, put in place a policy and procedure for managing appeals against decisions not to disclose information.**

The implementation of the following recommendation will enhance transparency and dissemination of best practices.

Recommendation 6: The Executive heads should develop and implement an information disclosure policy to heighten transparency and accountability in their respective organizations as a matter of urgency in the event that they have not already done so and report to the legislative bodies accordingly.

Internal control component: monitoring

119. Bringing the internal control circle to a close is the monitoring component. Organizations must be committed to monitoring the other four components of their internal control and assess the quality of performance and compliance. Monitoring activities consist of internal audit, inspections and performance assessments of staff at all levels, 360-degree performance assessments, tools such as scorecards and senior compacts for managers.

Benchmark 14: Executive heads, senior managers and staff members' performance is monitored and corrective action taken as necessary.

Tools:

a. Performance assessments for all staff levels including 360-degree feedback
b. Senior compacts or scorecard-type tools
c. Corrective measures for non-performing assets

120. The personal work plan is what makes staff members accountable for delivery of certain outputs and behaviours/competencies. All organizations have a performance assessment mechanism in place for staff members. Some organizations have differentiated the performance assessment requirement for regular fixed-term staff from temporary or project staff. For the latter in many cases the Inspector found that it was voluntary for managers to conduct a performance assessment. Most organizations did not require a periodic performance assessment for consultants, relying rather on end-of-project/assignment evaluations. Most of the performance assessment systems consist of a work plan with objectives and goals/outputs, competencies which the staff member would like to develop or are required, a mid-point review with the supervisor, and a final end-of-cycle evaluation.

121. Only a handful of organizations informed the Inspector that they use a 360-degree performance assessment tool within the performance assessment mechanism[81] which allows supervisees to assess the managerial competencies of their supervisor. The United Nations is pilot testing a new assessment tool whereby a supervisor with at least three supervisees can ask them for an assessment of his/her managerial skills and which also

[79] From the Global Accountability Report, Transparency, Chapter 6.1 p. 22-23.
[81] The Inspector understands that 360-degree performance evaluations can take place in the context of a management development training programme. This is not what is meant here.

includes a voluntary peer review system. FAO, UNHCR, UNRWA and WFP also include 360-degree performance assessments as a tool for managers to obtain feedback on their managerial strengths and weaknesses. **The Inspector suggests that in organizations where 360-degree performance assessment is not required, senior managers should voluntarily opt to be assessed not only by their supervisors but also by their peers and supervisees.**

122. Almost universally, performance assessments were not being effectively used in the organizations and there was a high degree of dissatisfaction voiced in this regard by staff representatives. Certain interviewees questioned the use of performance assessments as both a capacity development and an "accountability" tool. Staff were alarmed, it was noted, at the prospect of listing their development needs, lest this be seen as indicating a lack of capacity and could be used against them. Others mentioned the fact that managers did not complete the performance appraisals of their staff, the low quality of the performance assessment narratives, and mobility of staff, affecting fair assessments. Managers of some organizations reported that there was a lack of courage by many managers to write assessments which reflected the true performance rating for fear of staff contesting the assessment, which might trigger long tribunal discussions. Officials of one organization noted that the United Nations system was founded on a culture of consensus, whereby decisions are made in committees and groups and that this had weakened staff morale to be able to frame their work at the individual responsibility and accountability level. If the culture of consensus and fear of tribunal appeals paralyzes managers from making truthful assessments of staff members, it becomes difficult to remove non-performing staff members from duty. Some managers also explained that currently there was no possible action that could be taken against non-performing staff. If staff had poor ratings managers either have to dismiss them (which was found to be difficult) or tolerate their continued employment. **The area of performance assessments is one of the biggest weaknesses identified by the Inspector in the accountability architecture.**

123. There are good examples from UNFPA and UNHCR of attempting to overcome this obstacle. UNFPA has implemented a policy for the dismissal of non-performing staff members. This good initiative consists of allowing the organization to dismiss a staff member after three continuous years of under-performance or after two years of dissatisfactory service. UNFPA began implementing the said policy three years ago and informed the Inspector that it is now coming to the end of the third year, when staff members concerned would become "eligible" for dismissal. It informed the Inspector that it has dismissed one staff member thus far and that the case is currently being considered at the tribunal.

124. UNHCR has a good practice in the field of performance assessments and non-performance. As a first step the Performance Management Unit, which oversees performance appraisals, monitors not only compliance with the appraisal process but also the standards and quality of appraisal reports. It has the authority to return appraisals to supervisors who do not comply with the expected standards. The appraisals are actively used as a tool for assignments, contract renewal and promotions. When non- or underperforming staff do not improve their performance, the director of human resources has the authority to impose administrative measures as a consequence of their underperformance. The relevant administrative measures are: non-granting of a within-grade salary increment (step increase), reassignment to a more suitable position and termination for unsatisfactory service.

125. With regard to performance assessments for executive heads, none of the organizations has as yet initiated any assessment mechanism.[82] Executive heads are accountable to the governing and/or legislative bodies. It was stated that, if there was dissatisfaction with their performance, this would be communicated through these bodies. The United Nations has the best practice in assessments for senior managers. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon[83] stated in the 2011 Senior Compacts Signing Ceremony that: "Accountability should be second nature to all of us. It is nothing to fear, nor is it something to be viewed solely in terms of compliance, as something we are obligated to do. Rather, at its best, accountability is a concept that can help us to uphold the highest standards of excellence for which we strive every day." The Secretary-General enters into annual "Compacts" with senior

[82] See also "Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations system organizations" (JIU/REP/2009/8, chap. 3, sect. D).
[83] From 2011 Senior Compacts Signing Ceremony.

managers (heads of departments and offices, heads of peacekeeping missions, and special representatives of the Secretary-General) which state their objectives and expected outputs. These Compacts set specific programme objectives and managerial targets, including a Human Resources scorecard. For each manager the Compact includes the key objectives related to the specific mandate of each of the departments and ensure they are aligned to the objectives in budget documents. A Management Performance Board reviews the Compacts annually and reports to the Secretary-General on the managers' performance. A letter stating the managers' achievements and shortcomings is sent to the managers and each manager then prepares an action plan to take any corrective action required. The mechanism also helps in knowledge-sharing across the organization as innovative and creative ideas are shared with other managers. This is a good practice in the United Nations system. In order to raise the bar even further the Inspector suggests that the Management Performance Board clarify what action can be taken with regard to managers who continue to under-perform (as in the case of individual staff members) vis à vis their stated targets.

Benchmark 15: Recommendations of oversight bodies/internal audits and evaluations are tracked, implemented, and if not, clear justification should be provided.

Tools:

a. Information disclosure policy
b. Reporting on external and internal oversight recommendations
c. Tracking recommendations of internal and external audit, oversight bodies and internal, independent and self-evaluations

126. In United Nations system organizations, internal oversight mechanisms usually take the lead in monitoring compliance, effectiveness of processes and operations and performance of specific units/departments and programmes. The 2010 JIU report, "Audit Function in the United Nations system"[84] identified the major challenges/constraints faced by **internal audit/oversight** heads as: the follow-up and implementation of audit recommendations; resources; auditing the "One United Nations"; coordination with other oversight bodies; and independence. Additional constraints relate to the authority, centralization/decentralization, structure, planning, reporting and quality assessment of the internal audit activity and the performance and competence of internal auditors. Other challenges identified were, inter alia, the lack of accountability and sanctions against those who are responsible for the non-implementation of audit recommendations.[85]

127. In line with the JIU Audit Function report findings, similar challenges were identified specifically in the area of follow-up and implementation of the audit recommendations. The review enquired from organizations whether they had a follow-up mechanism in place for tracking the status of implementation or recording why a recommendation was not approved/accepted and, to take it even a step further, to see whether the recommendations were assigned to specific individuals who would be held accountable for the status of that recommendation's implementation. ICAO, ILO, ITU, UNDP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNOPS and WFP reported that they have in place a mechanism to link the findings of oversight bodies with individual performance. The United Nations senior managers reported that they are putting forward such a proposal in the Secretary-General's next report on accountability to be submitted to the next session of the General Assembly. The Inspector was informed of various mechanisms and systems and shares below two good practices among these:

[84] Audit function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2010/5).
[85] Ibid., Executive Summary.

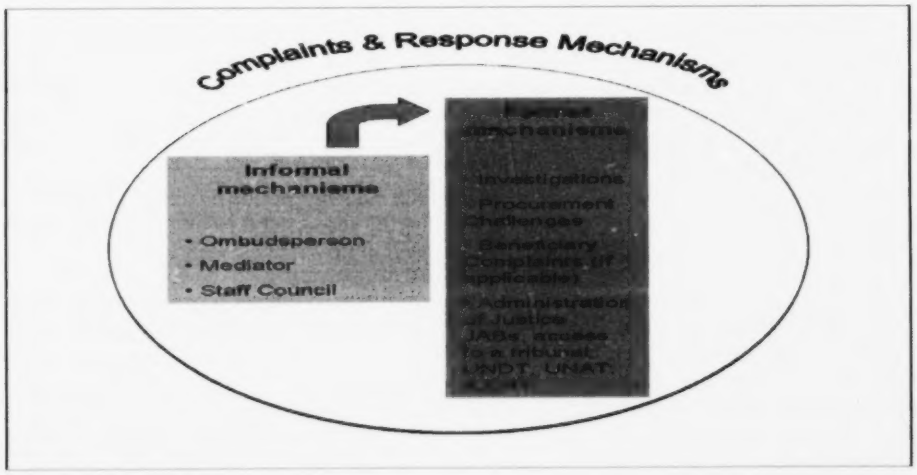
Good Practices:

United Nations: although the Secretariat informed the Inspector that it was drafting a proposal for the 67th session, the Inspector finds that the Senior Compacts already includes elements of linking the oversight recommendations to individual/senior manager performance. The current compacts include the objective of implementing recommendations accepted by management with targets to measure success criteria. The recommendations would then be assigned from the senior managers to line managers and cascade down to individuals so that an individual can be held responsible and accountable for their implementation.

WFP: Since 2010 the unit responsible for analyzing all reports of oversight bodies and recommendations provides information to all managers on outstanding recommendations, statistics on implementation and reminders. The line managers can then take into account and assign recommendations to individual managers and, when assessing their performance, take into account the status of implementation of recommendations. This has resulted in a strong follow-up culture with regard to internal audit recommendations. In 2010 53 per cent of medium-risk and 90 per cent of high-risk audit recommendations were closed and detailed action plans to monitor high-risk recommendations were developed.

C. Accountability component: complaints and response mechanisms

Figure 5



128. Enabling staff and stakeholders to seek and receive responses for grievances and alleged harm is a critical aspect of accountability. This is the mechanism through which stakeholders can hold an organization to account by querying a decision, action or policy and receiving an adequate response to their grievance. Transparency, internal controls and evaluation processes should be used to minimize the need for complaint mechanisms. Complaints and response mechanisms should be seen as a means of last resort for stakeholders to hold the organization to account and for organizations to become aware of an issue that requires a response. It constitutes the reactive part of an accountability framework.

129. In terms of accountability, the main stakeholders who would have to file complaints are the staff members of organizations. Access to independent formal and informal grievance procedures inside the organization is inter alia key to rigorous accountability. If staff feel that the grievance procedures are not working or not independent enough, they will not use them, nor will they blow the whistle in the event of misconduct for fear of retaliation.

130. For some organizations, other stakeholders are the beneficiaries of the organization's work. **Some excellent examples were identified of very well structured beneficiary complaints mechanisms, which are outlined in this section.**

131. Effective complaints and response mechanisms should comprise a two-tier system:

a. The first tier is informal. It is often implemented through mediation mechanisms, or an ombudsperson. This is very important when linked to an accountability framework, since it can proactively help in resolving conflicts or situations of misunderstanding between staff and management. It can create a culture of dialogue and prevent the occurrence of potentially damaging issues for the organization. More than conflict resolution, the first tier strongly contributes to conflict prevention.

b. he second tier is based on due process, access to legal representation, to a tribunal, to a fair trial, to appeals and more generally an organization's internal justice system. It also consists of an organization's framework of internal regulations and rules (circulars, bulletins, management notes, etc.) which describe in a more or less structured way the procedures applying to this form of response mechanism.

Benchmark 16: Staff members have recourse to non-formal complaints mechanisms.

Tools:

a. Procedures for non-formal grievances/rebuttals are outlined in a policy document and or handbook
b. A mediator or ombudsperson function is in place

132. Regarding non-formal grievance procedures, the JIU team encountered a variety of implementation levels throughout the United Nations system. Some interviewees did not feel comfortable in setting up non-formal grievance mechanisms, since this would possibly increase the number of petty cases to be dealt with. They also stressed the fact that ombuds services and mediation are very culturally specific (mostly Anglo-Saxon) and would therefore not be applicable to certain duty stations. Also, in times of budgetary constraints, it is very difficult for some organizations to plan for an ombudsperson or mediation mechanisms.

133. Some staff representatives were also very doubtful about the installation of such mechanisms. From their point of view it would weaken the position of staff, who would then have to overcome two different barriers to bring up their case against the organization. They fear that informal mechanisms would become a safeguard for management to discourage staff from bringing a case to the formal level of complaints.

134. The above-mentioned facts are acknowledged, however a well-functioning ombuds or mediation structure inside an organization would help in resolving some smaller issues in staff-management relations. Of course, the ombudsperson has to undergo a very strict selection process and has to be an example in terms of personal integrity and independence from pressure. WFP and the World Bank are two examples worth mentioning in this report, since they have both established ombuds and mediation mechanisms.

135. The World Bank goes even further by having established a special "Compliance Advisor Ombudsman" (CAO) in order to respond quickly and effectively to beneficiary complaints. It reports directly to the President and Board of the World Bank Group. The annual report for 2010[86] is very comprehensive and discloses every case of beneficiary complaint opened by CAO during the year and its status (assessed, settled, ongoing or transferred to compliance). **This practice is an excellent example of the principle of transparency and creating a stronger sense of accountability towards beneficiaries.**

136. In the United Nations, ombudsperson and mediation systems are already in place. The United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services are available to United Nations staff world-wide through regional representations.[87] However staff in some regions would have to travel or seek advice from the ombudsperson via phone or e-mail, which is not an appropriate way to deal with confidential and/or personal information. As evidenced in the Report of the Secretary-General on "Activities of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman

[86] "The CAO at 10 – Annual Report FY 2010 and review FY 2000-10", World Bank Group.
[87] http://www.un.org/en/ombudsman/contact.shtml.

and Mediation Services" (A/65/303)[88] and its final paragraph of the document "Building credibility and trust through success", "staff are more likely to be comfortable raising sensitive, potentially serious, issues when they have a direct personal connection with someone and not just a voice at the end of a phone line, or worse, on the other end of an e-mail communication. The credibility of the office would be reinforced through demonstrating this level of commitment to the staff and helping to resolve workplace issues."

137. In the light of the recent "Report of the Office of the Ombudsman for the United Nations Funds and Programmes", staff and management of participating funds and programmes (UNDP and the associated funds, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNOPS) are encouraged to contact this office, since they are a valuable resource to accompany change management processes. According to this same report it is disappointing that the Ombudsman continues "to receive information from visitors across the organizations suggesting that some very senior representatives of management continue to dissuade staff from contacting the Ombudsmen and even threaten punitive action should they do so".[89]

138. This direct or indirect retaliation does not only seem to take place in the case of whistle-blowing as mentioned earlier in this report, but also in some minor cases of bad staff-management relations. In one example which was provided to the Inspector, staff even used false identities to contact the ombudsperson because they were scared of retaliation. **In the Inspector's opinion, this is an example of confusing the role of the ombudsman and the ethics office. The latter is mandated to perform protection from retaliation.**[90]

139. The Ombudsperson, Mediation and Ethics functions are quite new inside the United Nations system and it will take some time for them to become a recognized cogwheel of accountability in the system. It is therefore all the more vital that all participating organizations promote them and give them more visibility by providing them with a clear outline of roles and responsibilities and communicate their presence inter alia through town-hall meetings or information leaflets.[91]

Benchmark 17: Staff members, consultants, non-staff, stakeholders/beneficiaries and vendors have recourse to formal complaints mechanisms and organizations have mechanisms to respond to such complaints.

Tools:

a. Investigation function, hotlines, complaints forms etc. for staff and external
b. Grievance mechanisms: United Nations Dispute or ILO Administrative Tribunals
c. Procurement challenges

140. In United Nations organizations staff members who notice failures in internal control are obliged to report such failures and misconduct. Audits and inspections may also bring to light allegations of misconduct. Where the staff members bring such claims varies from organization to organization and is dependent on what kind of claim is being brought forward. Many of the officials interviewed stated that cases of fraud and financial misconduct were investigated by the formal investigation function (where it exists). Harassment and sexual harassment were dealt with by human resources and peer panels. Allegations of retaliation for whistle-blowing were under the scope of the ethics office. Most of the big United Nations organizations possess an investigation function (FAO, IAEA, ILO, United Nations, UNDP, UNESCO UNFPA, UNICEF,[92] UNIDO, UNHCR, UNOPS, UNRWA, WHO, WFP, WIPO) with great variation in the number of investigative staff ranging from one (ILO, UNESCO, WIPO, UNIDO, IAEA, UNRWA) to 93 professional staff in investigations in the United Nations. It is worth mentioning that JIU, as the only independent and external oversight body in the United Nations system, is mandated to

[88] http://undocs.org/A/65/303.
[89] "Report of the Office of the Ombudsman for the United Nations Funds and Programmes" for 2010.
[90] The Inspector would like to point out that some organizations which will remain anonymous in this report mentioned that fear of retaliation is in fact a reality.
[91] WFP for example has issued a very short leaflet outlining the differences between mediation and ombudsman roles. ILO which established an ethics office and an Office of Mediator has issued "Principles of Conduct for Staff of the ILO" and "The Ethics Office: an Introduction".
[92] In UNICEF its Investigation Unit carries out all internal investigations including harassment and sexual harassment investigations.

perform an investigation function.[93] From an accountability perspective it is important that coherence in investigations is established within organizations to heighten the investigative powers and capacity and ensure due process to staff under investigation. It also strengthens the credibility of investigations, which has a direct impact on the culture of accountability. The investigation function is subject to another review by JIU.

141. When staff members feel that they have been treated unfairly and improperly, or have been the subject of a poor performance assessment, disciplinary or administrative measures, they should have recourse not only to the non-formal dispute resolution systems mentioned above but also to formal dispute mechanisms. The United Nations system organizations are members of either the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) or the ILO Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT). Staff members follow established procedures to bring their cases either to ILOAT or UNDT. Staff members and organizations under the jurisdiction of UNDT[94] have a second level forum in the form of an Appeals Tribunal. Staff and organizations under the jurisdiction of ILOAT have narrow possibilities for a review of judgments rendered and it is noted[95] that reviews occur only under exceptional circumstances. The scope of both of these tribunals is limited to staff members and those that have a contractual relationship with the organization if the contract includes such clauses and would not include volunteers, interns and in some cases contractors if their contract does not include such clauses.

142. In the case of contractors in a procurement dispute several organizations (United Nations, UNDP, UNOPS, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, and UNRWA) have established a complaint mechanism known also as procurement challenges or bid protests. This allows vendors who were not awarded a contract to challenge the decisions taken. The JIU Note on Procurement found that, "... most United Nations organizations lack a formal mechanism that allows vendors to challenge their procurement decisions ... in the absence of such formal mechanisms the organizations are exposed to the risk of being perceived as partial, handling complaints ... depending on who the complainant is".[96] For the sake of transparency it is important that organizations, especially those with high procurement volumes, establish a formal mechanism to allow vendors to challenge procurement decisions.

143. Few organizations have an explicit policy and mechanism to allow beneficiaries/stakeholders to lodge complaints against the organization. Many organizations do have anonymous hotlines (telephone, fax or email accounts) which are available through their public website. However, the Inspector finds that this method may not reach a large number of beneficiaries who may not have access to any communication tools over the internet. **In this area there are good practices in IDB, UNHCR and World Bank which have proactively included a complaints mechanism for their beneficiaries/stakeholders**.

[93] Chapter 4 of the JIU Statute.

[94] United Nations Secretariat, Peacekeeping and Political Missions, United Nations Offices Away From Headquarters, United Nations Regional Commissions, International Criminal Tribunals, Funds, Programmes, and Other Entities: International Computing Centre (ICC), International Trade Centre (ITC), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Secretariat of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), United Nations University (UNU), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) (local staff administered by UNDP), UN-Women.

[95] Neither Statute nor Rules provide for the review of judgments: according to Article VI(1) of the Statute they are "final and without appeal". They are thus binding on the parties under the res judicate rule. Yet the Tribunal has a limited power of review which the case law defines. Since review is a quite exceptional process, it will exercise its power only in narrowly defined circumstances. From http://www.ilo.org/public/english/tribunal/advice/index.htm.

[96] Procurement reforms in the United Nations system (JIU/NOTE/2011/1), section on Ethics Management and Vendor Issues-Procurement Challenge/Bid Protest System.

144. UNHCR has placed accountability towards protected persons or persons of concern at the heart of its accountability framework. This is reflected in making sure that beneficiaries (concerned persons) also have access to complaints a d grievance procedures. Of the 814 complaints received by the UNHCR Inspector General's Office in 2009-2010, 504 were from refugees and other protected persons.[97] The Inspector General attributes the rise in complaints from refugees to its online complaint system. UNHCR officials reported that the number of complaints from refugees continues to rise. UNHCR officials informed the Inspector that they are working on a system which would allow them to provide information back to the refugees on how their complaints were treated and the outcome. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is pilot testing a beneficiary complaints mechanism in Haiti with a view to eventually widening the scope worldwide.

145. **The World Bank set up its Inspection Panel in 1993 to receive complaints** from individuals and communities who feel that they were being affected by World Bank projects or concern about World Bank conduct. The individuals and communities can expect mediation or settlement of their complaints by making use of this mechanism. **The Inspector particularly appreciates the information pamphlet developed by the World Bank in 12 languages for distribution in the communities where projects are implemented. This is a best practice that recognizes that not all beneficiaries would have access to internet websites to be informed of this process and to send in their complaints.** Interestingly in a self-evaluation type retrospective of its inspection panel the World Bank noted that the introduction of the inspection panel had not only led to providing individuals affected with a voice but that the Bank staff now pay, "... greater attention within the Bank to compliance with policies and procedures, to supervision, and to how work is done ...".[98] This seems to imply that being accountable to the outside world causes staff to feel more accountability than when they are immune to any external complaints. **The World Bank is one of the leading examples in accountability and the various multi-lateral development banks all now have similar mechanisms in place.**

146. **The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) established an Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism (ICIM) in February 2010** following a request from its Board of Executive Directors for **an enhanced mechanism to incorporate the lessons learned** from the complaints received as well as from the accountability mechanisms of other institutions. **ICIM is an independent forum and process to address complaints from communities or individuals who allege that they are or might be adversely affected by IDB-financed operations**. ICIM reflects an institutional commitment to accountability, transparency and effectiveness. In keeping with its commitment to transparency, **IDB goes further and publishes the complaints received (in summary form and protecting confidentiality, if requested) and the organization's response to the complaints[99] on the IDB website.**

147. **The Inspector believes that the cases presented are exceptionally good practices promoting transparency and accountability of the organization not just to the traditional partners but also to their beneficiaries. The Inspector recognizes the cost and resource implications of such mechanisms and measures but would like to recommend to organizations with direct beneficiaries to open their line of communication to their beneficiaries and allow complaints to be made in the true spirit of accountability and transparency.**

[97] Report on Activities of the Inspector General's Office, Report of the Inspector General (A/AC.96/1089), July 27, 2010.
[98] The Inspection Panel at 15 Years, p. 110, Inspection Panel World Bank 2009.
[99] See http://www.iadb.org/en/mici/registry-of-cases,1805.html for a registry of cases and their status.

IV. CONCLUSIONS: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND THE WAY FORWARD

148. The review found that for the most part organizations possessed many of the components that make up accountability within an organization. The Inspector finds that huge strides have been made in the last few years and applauds organizations that have taken a proactive attitude towards accountability by developing frameworks and internal policies and guidelines.

149. From a system-wide perspective, similar to the strengths and weaknesses seen for the seven accountability frameworks identified earlier in the report, the system has shown its strength in the areas of internal controls such as control environment and monitoring. Although not all organizations have a formal internal control framework in place,[100] most of the organizations have the basic elements that make up internal controls. There have been advances but more work could be done in the area of risk assessment, information and communication, especially in the area of internal and external communication and complaints and responses, especially of a formal nature.

150. Control activities, especially in the area of alignment between delegation of authority and management responsibilities, could be further improved across the system. In order for accountability to exist a staff member must first be granted responsibility, authority to carry out the assigned duties and finally be held accountable. **If these are not aligned, as the Inspector noted in the report above, there is incoherence and confusion, leading to blurring of the accountability line.** This is seen as a particular weakness in organizations with a big field/decentralized structure where delegation of authority may differ per subject area. Resources continue to be a challenge to the system in implementing these accountability measures. The Inspector also recognizes that the culture of an organization cannot be changed overnight. Without consistent application of discipline and motivation, including rewards, the organizations are currently relying on staff members' personal integrity and ethics to ensure compliance with their internal control regulations and rules. The culture of accountability starts with training and ownership but can only be rigorous with managers setting the tone at the top, bolstered with examples of holding themselves accountable.

151. **The Inspector is heartened to learn that, despite resource constraints, organizations have implemented innovative and creative ways to motivate staff and show their commitment to a culture of accountability. These efforts are recognized and applauded.**

152. Within the limited resources available to the JIU team, the review presented 2 pillars, 5 principles and 17 benchmarks to measure the strength of accountability in an organization and the minimum standards for an accountability framework. The evaluation also identified tools to support the implementation of the standards. The Inspector hopes that these will serve the organizations that are developing accountability frameworks and those which are updating their existing frameworks.

153. The Inspector reiterates that moving accountability from theory to practice requires a strong culture of accountability and commitment to transparency. The present review was mandated to provide a comparative analysis of accountability frameworks/components and was unable to delve into actual empirical experience which would have required more resources and time. The Inspector believes that, to measure the true state of accountability inside an organization, it would be appropriate to conduct an in-depth evaluation on the effectiveness of the accountability framework by measuring how far each of the standards/benchmarks is being implemented. Perceptions forming a large part of culture of accountability, such evaluations should be accompanied by in-depth staff and management surveys. Given the degree of scepticism prevailing and the fact that many of the organizations have never evaluated their accountability frameworks, in part because they are too new, although certain elements such as internal controls are regularly reviewed by internal audits, the Inspector recommends that there should be an evaluation during the next 2-3 years for those organizations which already

[100] FAO survey to 23 Representatives of Internal Audit Services (RIAS) (16 respondents) found that five agencies fully implemented a formal internal control framework, five are in the process of doing so and six do not yet have plans for implementing a formal mechanism. All agencies which have adopted a formal framework are following the COSO framework. FAO presentation to the 42nd Plenary RIAS meeting 22 September 2011. WFP has formally issued an Executive Director's Circular regarding the Internal Control Framework.

have an accountability framework and a timeframe of at least 5-6 years for those currently without one in order to test the maturity of the frameworks. Such evaluations should be undertaken by each organization and reported to the legislative bodies as a first step to harmonizing the frameworks through the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) of the Chief Executive Board (CEB).

The implementation of the following recommendation will enhance coordination and cooperation among the United Nations system organizations.

Recommendation 7: The General Assembly and other legislative bodies should request their executive heads to undertake a follow-up evaluation on the implementation of the relevant accountability frameworks/systems for their consideration in 2015.

Annex I

Definitions of accountability from organizational accountability frameworks

ICSC	A framework for Human Resource Management Glossary definition of Accountability, August 2001, p. 20: *"Concept which implies taking ownership of all responsibilities and honouring commitments; delivering outputs for which the staff member has responsibility within prescribed time, cost and quality standards; operating in compliance with organizational regulations and rules; supporting subordinates, providing oversight and taking responsibility for delegated assignments; taking personal responsibility for personal shortcomings and, where applicable, those of the work unit."*
ILO	Paragraph 9 of IGDS No. 195 notes that ILO framework is based on core principles which inform all accountability policies, *"which are clarity of responsibility; alignment of accountability with organizational-wide goals; delegation of authority; cost-benefit considerations; performance monitoring and reporting, and the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct."*
United Nations	a. A/64/640 Secretary-General's proposed definition, "*Accountability is the obligation of the Organization and its staff members to be answerable for delivering specific results that have been determined through a clear and transparent assignment of responsibility, subject to the availability of resources and the constraints posed by external factors. Accountability includes achieving objectives and results in response to mandates, fair and accurate reporting on performance results, stewardship of funds, and all aspects of performance in accordance with regulations, rules and standards, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions.*" b. A/RES/64/259 General Assembly decides that accountability should be defined as follows: *"Accountability is the obligation of the Secretariat and its staff members to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken by them, and to be responsible for honouring their commitments, without prequalification or exception. Accountability includes achieving objectives and high-quality results in a timely and cost-effective manner, in fully implementing and delivering on all mandates to the Secretariat approved by the United Nations intergovernmental bodies and other subsidiary organs established by them in compliance with all resolutions, regulations, rules and ethical standards; truthful, objective, accurate and timely reporting on performance results; responsible stewardship of funds and resources; all aspects of performance, including a clearly defined role of the oversight bodies and in full compliance with accepted recommendations."*
UNDP	"*Accountability is the obligation to (i) demonstrate that work has been conducted in accordance with agreed rules and standards and (ii) report fairly and accurately on performance results vis-à-vis mandated roles and/or plans.*" DP/2008/16/rev.1 The UNDP accountability system. Accountability framework and oversight policy.[101]

[101] The framework states that UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS have agreed that the harmonization of the definitions should be based on authoritative sources and that the key definitions, including that of accountability, are harmonized with UNFPA and UNOPS at the request of the Executive Board. DP/2008/16/Rev.1, para. 2 and para. 3. As can be seen above however, UNFPA does not use the harmonized definition in its framework.

UNFPA	UNFPA Accountability Framework DP/FPA/2007/20, para. 3: "*Accountability is the process whereby public service organizations and individuals within them are held responsible for their decisions and actions including their stewardship of public funds, fairness, and all aspects of performance, in accordance with agreed rules and standards, and fair and accurate reporting on performance results vis-à-vis mandated roles and/or plans. In other words, it means that those in charge of UNFPA programmes, activities and guidance are held accountable for efficient and effective management.*"
UNICEF	Report on the Accountability system of UNICEF E/ICEF/2009/15, para. 2: "*(a) Accountability is the obligation to demonstrate that work has been conducted in accordance with agreed rules and standards, and that performance results have been reported fairly and accurately.*"
UNOPS	DP/2008/55 para. 16: *(b) Accountability means the obligation to (i) demonstrate that work has been conducted in accordance with agreed rules and standards and (ii) report fairly and accurately on performance results vis à vis mandated roles and/or plans.*
WHO	No clear definition of accountability.

Annex II

Overview of action to be taken by participating organizations on JIU recommendations
JIU/REP/2011/5

		Intended impact	United Nations, its funds and programmes													Specialized agencies and IAEA													
			United Nations*	UNCTAD	UNODC/UNOV	UNEP	UN-Habitat	UNHCR	UNRWA	UNDP	UNFPA	UNICEF	WFP	UNOPS	UNAIDS	ILO	FAO	UNESCO	ICAO	WHO	UPU	ITU	WMO	IMO	WIPO	UNIDO	UNWTO	IAEA
Report	For action		☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
	For information		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recommendation 1		a											E		E		E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 2		f	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Recommendation 3		d	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 4		d									E			E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 5		b	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 6		b/o	E	E	E		E	E	E		E				E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 7		c	L																									

Legend: **L:** Recommendation for decision by legislative organ
E: Recommendation for action by executive head
☐: Recommendation does not require action by this organization

Intended impact: **a:** enhanced accountability **b:** dissemination of best practices **c:** enhanced coordination and cooperation **d:** enhanced controls and compliance **e:** enhanced effectiveness **f:** significant financial savings **g:** enhanced efficiency **o:** other

* Covers all entities listed in ST/SGB/2002/11 other than UNCTAD, UNODC, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNRWA.

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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Joint Inspection Unit

Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2011/5).

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Summary

The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2011/5) maps out and assesses the existing (various) accountability frameworks in the United Nations system and identifies gaps where they exist. The report analyses the components which exist in the organizations that do not possess a stand-alone formal accountability framework document. In addition, the report identifies good/best practices in developing and implementing accountability frameworks/components of accountability. The report contains seven recommendations: two addressed to legislative bodies and five to the executive heads.

The present note sets out the views of United Nations system organizations on the recommendations provided in the report. The views of the system have been consolidated on the basis of inputs provided by member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

I. Introduction

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Accountability frameworks in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2011/5) maps out and assesses the existing (various) accountability frameworks in the United Nations system and identifies gaps where they exist. The report analyses the components which exist in the organizations that do not possess a stand-alone formal accountability framework document. In addition, the report identifies good/best practices in developing and implementing accountability frameworks/components of accountability.

2. The report found that seven United Nations organizations possess a stand-alone formal accountability framework and three Secretariat entities possess a programme-level accountability framework. Other United Nations system organizations have various key components of accountability to varying degrees, several of them with strong internal control systems or components in place. The report concludes that accountability goes beyond a robust internal control system. It should encompass issues such as identifying the political covenant with member States, recourse for key stakeholders to complaints and response mechanisms, transparency within organizations to member States, beneficiaries and the general public and a strong culture of accountability.

3. Organizations of the United Nations system generally support the content and conclusions of the report. The corresponding recommendations are generally in line with the analyses and conclusions in most agencies, and those recommendations relevant to and accepted by executive heads will be taken up accordingly.

II. General comments

4. Organizations of the United Nations system commend the Joint Inspection Unit on the report, which they indicate includes useful information on benchmarking accountability, and endorse the thrust of the recommendations. The Joint Inspection Unit acknowledges correctly that accountability is both complex and multidimensional. The Unit has proposed a general framework of accountability and underlying principles that can be adapted to each organization's specific situation.

5. Agencies endorse in particular the strong focus on the political compact (covenant) with member States, as this defines the boundaries within which all organizations of the United Nations system must operate. In this regard, agencies support drawing attention to legislative bodies on the need to continue to make progress on results-based management and to provide the resources necessary to do so. Agencies concur with the inclusion of the best practice established by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission within the framework of internal control. This is an acknowledged international standard and one which all agencies can usefully adopt.

6. Agencies also agree that formal and informal complaints and response mechanisms which deal with wider accountabilities to stakeholders are important and must be catered for within the accountability frameworks. They endorse the opinion of the Joint Inspection Unit that the substance of the accountability framework is more important than its form, and agree that it is the culture of accountability and the actual application of accountability in operation that counts.

In addition, agencies take note of the report's finding that the lack of a procurement challenge mechanism is a common feature among the agencies that are identified as not having a formal accountability framework.

7. Similarly, agencies were of the view that the report would benefit from the further clarification of several issues. Relating to the sentiment in the report on the lack of recourse once retaliation had taken place, agencies wish to note that such a broad statement should be clearly verified to ensure that it is accurately presented — not least because, as drafted, it could cause staff concern about reporting misconduct. In addition, the report's recommendation that all organizations issue (each) a consolidated "anti-fraud policy" would also benefit from further elaboration, since this would be difficult to support without further concrete supporting arguments.

8. With respect to the report's coverage on access to information and transparency within an organization (e.g., a staff member requesting documents for appeal), it would be desirable to note the exchange of information between organizations on accountability measures applied to staff who are moving between organizations.

III. Specific comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1
Executive heads of United Nations system organizations that have not yet developed stand-alone accountability frameworks should do so as a matter of priority inspired by the benchmarks contained in this report.

9. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation. They note that an overarching accountability framework would be useful in making more concrete the links between organizational mission, strategic planning, evaluation, organizational learning, and results. Setting up such a framework might also be useful in identifying the gaps between these elements. However, the implementation of this recommendation should take into consideration the peculiar differences among organizations, especially with regard to the benchmarks related to the implementation of complaints and response mechanisms (benchmarks 16 and 17). Limited resources may not make it possible for some organizations to have in place an ombudsperson and mediator.

Recommendation 2
The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations which have not yet done so should take decisions based on a results-based-management approach and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to implement the organizations' strategic plans and results-based management.

10. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation.

Recommendation 3

Executive heads should incorporate evaluation, including self-evaluation results, in their annual reporting to legislative bodies.

11. Agencies note that more clarity is needed with respect to details and the nature of information to be provided to legislative bodies in the context of recommendation 3. Agencies note that providing information to these bodies could lead to the public dissemination of sensitive information. For example, within the United Nations there would be a particular concern with reports relating to the activities of the Office of Legal Affairs, in view of the sensitivity of the information concerned. In this example, public reporting of internal assessment by the Office of Legal Affairs of weaknesses in the way the Organization deals with third-party claims could hinder the ability of the United Nation to defend future claims.

Recommendation 4

Executive heads of organizations which have not yet done so should inform their staff members of their decisions on disciplinary measures imposed on staff by publishing lists (in annexes to the annual reports and on a website) describing the offence and measures taken while ensuring the anonymity of the staff member concerned.

12. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation.

Recommendation 5

Executive heads should instruct their human resources divisions to put mechanisms in place for recognizing outstanding performance by developing creative ways and means to motivate staff through awards, rewards and other incentives.

13. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation. They note, however, that reference should also be made to other motivational and career development tools such as stretch assignments, job rotation, job-shadowing, participation in missions and increasing responsibility and authority. Organizations also note that performance pay is an issue within the purview of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). In the United Nations Secretariat, the broader issue of performance management and rewarding and sanctioning staff is already before the General Assembly in the context of the report of ICSC, as well as the administrative and human resources questions and recommendations contained in the present report of the Joint Inspection Unit. To introduce additional mandates in this area of work at the present time would be duplicative. To that end, agencies suggest the need for active collaboration between organizations of the United Nations system and ICSC on their work in developing a more effective system of rewarding and sanctioning staff on the basis of performance.

Recommendation 6

Executive heads should develop and implement an information disclosure policy to heighten transparency and accountability in their respective organizations as a matter of urgency in the event that they have not already done so and report to the legislative bodies accordingly.

14. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation. For those that have not already done so, efforts are under way to ensure strong policies that cover internal control frameworks, financial disclosure, anti-fraud and integrity and ethical conduct. However, any disclosure policy should include sufficient safeguards to fully protect the interests of the organizations of the United Nations system. At a minimum, exceptions from disclosure should include considerations of (a) confidentiality, (b) possible harm to individuals, (c) security and (d) legal considerations.

Recommendation 7

The General Assembly and other legislative bodies should request their executive heads to undertake a follow-up evaluation on the implementation of the relevant accountability frameworks/systems for their consideration in 2015.

15. Organizations of the United Nations system support and welcome this recommendation. They note, however, that agencies would review their own accountability frameworks going beyond the recommendation contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit.